

MICAH

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Introduction and Chapter One

Again I am indebted to the many previous writers on this subject

Micah lived throughout the reigns of three kings of Judah namely Jotham (742-735), Ahaz (735-715) and Hezekiah (715-687) and probably prophesied between 737 to 696.

Jotham was a good king. Ahaz was evil. Hezekiah was an able ruler and introduced reforms which had little effect upon the people. It was in Ahaz's reign that there was internal corruption in which he reintroduced the worship of Baal and sacrificed his own children through the fire to Moloch. In the days of Hezekiah people had become unscrupulous.

Micah came from Moresheth and was a contemporary of Hosea, Isaiah and Amos. In fact, Amos came from Tekoah which was only about twenty miles from Moresheth. Micah was a powerful and brave speaker and it is clear that he quoted Isaiah and vice versa. His first prophecy was before the destruction of Samaria in 721.

The book can be divided into three parts

- Judgment upon Samaria and Judah (chapters 1 and 2)
- The Messiah and salvation (chapters 3 to 5)
- The Divine controversy (chapters 6 and 7)

Micah was a common name and it is a shortened version of Micaiah which name means Who is like Jehovah? There are at least seven other Micahs in the Old Testament.

Chapter 1 verse 1 tells us about Micah and that his ministry was to both Samaria and Judah. Verse 2 to 4 is a Divine call for all nations to listen to Adonai Jehovah who speaks from His holy temple. He is to leave the temple and tread upon the high places of the earth. This would be accompanied by an earthquake and storm with volcanic eruptions (see Psalm 18. 6- 15). The mountains would melt before Him and the valleys split. The hills would dissolve like wax and valleys would be cleft by torrential rain. The language may be hyperbolic but it expresses the seriousness of the judgment that is to come. The contrast was the people's sin and the holiness of God. Wrongdoing will never escape the Lord.

Verse 5 has presented problems to some. Jacob was given the name of Israel, and Israel was the sole name given to all the Jews, the people of God. The nation of Israel had split into two kingdoms of Israel and Judah with Samaria the capital of Israel and Jerusalem the capital of Judah which basically consisted of two tribes Judah and Benjamin who were loyal to the house of David. In this verse Jacob is a synonym for the whole of Israel including Judah. The whole nation, Israel and Judah had rebelled against God and both had accepted Baalim and their high places where idolatrous worship was made. Both Samaria and Jerusalem were to suffer from their sins.

The following two verses describes Samaria before its destruction in 721. The proud and impregnable fortress would be destroyed and left as a heap and when the destruction takes place vineyards would be still flourish as it would remain a fruitful region.

All the images of idols were destroyed by the Assyrians. These idols had come about partly by the finances of prostitution and there were many Temple prostitutes paid by idolatrous worshippers. In the Old Testament, idolatry is often referred to as spiritual adultery. Today, there is substantial income arising out of pornography.

We should be aware as to whether there are any idols in our lives, that is to say anything that is more important than the Lord. We would do well to recall the words of William Cowper.

The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee.

Micah would lament, in accordance with the traditions of his people, uttering dirge-like utterances. When he says that he will walk naked that does not mean nude, but in his undergarments. The word naked is used in Scripture to indicate inadequate clothing and showing one's underwear or what is positionally the same as underwear.

(See article on [Nakedness](#) on this site)

Micah refers to the cries of animals and birds such as the piteous cry of the jackal and the fearful screech of the ostrich. The wound of the people was grievous and incurable and self-inflicted and they would cry out, The day of reckoning would come.

Verses 10 to 12 speak of Gath, Accho, Beth-le-Aphrah, Saphir, Zaanan, Beth-ezel and Maroth. Gath was near Micah's home and the expression Tell it not in Gath probably means that the troubles were so great that there was no point in discussing them. Accho was one of the towns which Israel could not drive out when they conquered Canaan. Beth-le-Aphrah (house of dust) was in the low country known as Shephelah. Saphir means beautiful and was a few miles west of Ashdod who would be humbled display their shame in nakedness. Zaanan would perish by starvation if they did not vacate that city. Beth-ezel would no longer be able to take refugees. The inhabitants of Maroth were on the route of the invading army coming via Lachish and they needed help but no salvation would come.. The coming calamity affected everyone even to the gates of Jerusalem.

The following verses refers to the preparation and speed of the horses and chariots of Lachish. The prophet accuses Lachish of being the beginning of the sin of the daughter of Zion although that sin is not specified. It may be that God's people, being dependent on trade with Egypt and resultant idolatry, or that the northern kingdom called the transgression of Israel had spread idolatry into Judah through Lachish which was a centre of idolatrous systems of worship.

Judah's sins caused Micah to denounce the town of Moresheth-Gath and that the nation would have to give the enemies parting gifts. The town would be given up to the enemy and delivered with the farewell presents of a dowry. The name Achzib means deceit and would become that to the kings of Israel by which Judah is intended. The winter brook of Achzib would fail in the drought (Jeremiah 15.18).

Verses 15 and 16 refer to the conquest. Mareshah was the next town to which Micah turned. This town was close to Gath and Achzib and the conquerors would take this town. Adullam was an ancient city once providing a cave in which David could hide. Perhaps what is meant here is that the aristocracy might find a shelter here.

Judah is represented as a mother sorrowing for her children and are called to mourning by cutting their hair, although this was forbidden by the law (Leviticus 19. 27ff etc). They were to make themselves bald as the gier eagle and go into captivity.

Chapter two

This chapter begins with Divine condemnation of the aristocracy who live in luxury and plan evil while on their beds, They do not hide their evil intents. They use violence to steal land and property with shameless and criminal intent. Micah indicates that as soon as it is light they put their unscrupulous plans into action. The wealthy landowners would see a field, covet it and set about

adding it and perhaps a house to their collection. They oppresses the poor and humble man and rob them of their inheritance. Leviticus 25. 13 sets out that in the year of jubilee all properties must revert to their rightful owner. To the farmer the ownership of his land was vital for his livelihood and personal nourishment,

In verses 3 to 5 we are reminded that God sees everything and, as a result, God was devising punishment for these people and disparagingly refers to them as 'this family'. The rich had the power and used it for their own selfish and evil ends but now they would encounter the One with Almighty power who was going to deal with them. They would not be able to even remove their necks from judgment. Necks are quoted to indicate the heavy yoke worn at appropriate times. They walked haughtily and with pride but this would be no more.

This would be a time of retribution and may refer beyond the Assyrian invasion to the conquest by Babylon and a taunt or tense song would spring up from the Jews with wailing and lamentation of utter ruin. What had been allotted to them was no longer theirs but that of the conqueror and his army here called apostates. The rule of the year of jubilee would not now implement the reversion of the land to the original owner.

The prophet's word antagonised the people and they told him not to speak like this (verse 6). They did not believe that the prophesied shame would fall upon them.

There are lessons here for us today. We must not be complacent. The Bible tells us to take heed lest WE fall. (1 Corinthians 10. 12). As Graham Scroggie said, We should live each day as if it were our last. We read, When the Lord comes will He find faith on the earth? People today, even Christians, will not endure sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4. 3) but rather embrace new ideas and be modern and trendy.

God's reply comes in verse 7. The people of God owned Jacob as their ancestor. Jacob failed many times but maintained his faith in God. God's promises were to Jacob and not to those who called themselves after his name as they were totally unlike their forefather. It is here said that the Spirit of the Lord was not straitened, not shortened. Did they consider Him to be impatient?

The people threw back an impudent reply as to the prophecy of Micah saying, Are these His doings? God was the unchanging One who promised blessings to their forefather and so how could the prophet's words be true?

Verses 8 and 9 reveal more evil practices. The people were in violation of Divine principles and believed that they were not guilty of any faults. They made God an enemy and were guilty of an uprising against Him. They even removed outer cloaks from people which were usually worn on cold and dark nights. They may have been used as articles of pledge, pending payments of something. Unprotected women and children were being evicted from their homes. The women may be widows and this evil was done to satisfy the avarice of the aristocracy. Perhaps the children were being sold into slavery in a foreign land and would grow up in want and neglect. And all of this was being done by the people that God had blessed.

The land had been a resting place for God's people but it was impossible for it to be so now. The prophet tells the people to arise and go since a sore destruction was coming.

Verse 11 talks of a prophet who comes preaching falsehoods and telling lies even promising wine and strong drink for all and he will be accepted by the people. Today in so-called Christian circles we have false prophets with their false teachings and people accept them and, as a consequence, true doctrine is ignored and ridiculed. David Pawson, on a tape I have said, Only young people have the answers.

In the last 120 years or so, we have had new doctrines which are man-made and not Biblical including the Pentecostal and charismatic teachings. Then there has been the ecumenical movement, or Churches Together, in which doctrine does not matter and we can all worship

together although we have major differences. We have evangelists making lots of money for themselves whereas the Gospel is free and there are 15,000 so called Christian cults in North America. Although of course, it is not Christian we have physicists and spiritualists prophesying all sorts of things and people believe this.

The final two verses of this chapter contains a sudden promise in the middle of the denunciation of the people. The people were going into exile because of their sins but the remnant of the people will eventually be gathered together. They would be set as a secure flock of sheep in the Edomite city of Bozrah, a city renowned for its large flocks. They would now happily sound like a crowd of men. The Lord Jehovah will go before them and prepare the way. It is said that this may refer to the return from exile in Babylon. It may also refer to a future day when all the twelve tribes of Israel will be restored to their land by their Messiah.

Chapter three

The first four verses deal mainly with the evil princes and those in authority.

It was the responsibility of the rulers to administer the law (Exodus 18. 25ff) and the people were entitled to turn to them. The rulers were responsible for justice but failed disgracefully. They had no sense of what was right or wrong. They were not interested in the community but only in themselves. They did not care for the flock and did not maintain righteousness in the land. Micah calls them cannibals in a graphic and unpleasant way. They should have protected the flock from every adversary and not torn the skin from their backs. Yet in their hour of need, these evil rulers called upon Jehovah. They showed no mercy to their own people and so that the heavens would be as brass to them. Jehovah would not answer them. Their evil deeds meant that they would be shown no mercy.

Even today some people call upon the Lord, including those who do not believe in Him. I have known people go to physicists, mediums and spiritualists and, as a last resort, call upon God and some of these callers do not believe in God.

The Biblical principle is that mercy will be shown to those who show mercy.

God and the doctor we adore
When in trouble, not before.
The danger past. God is forgotten
And the doctor slighted.

The next verses deal with false prophets. There are false prophets today and some call themselves Christians. They are always with us. False prophets preach heresy which is defined as provocative teaching which does not agree with the doctrines once and for ever delivered to the saints (Jude 3)

The spiritual leaders of Micah's time did not know, or want to know, the Will of God and Jehovah condemns them for leading His people astray. Those who spiritually lead the people have a great responsibility and if they teach false doctrine or improper practices then they will bear the responsibility of their errors. As in Micah's day, false prophets are governed by what benefit they will receive and I know such who bite with their teeth and say, Peace. I have met modern day 'prophets' who are aggressive and offensive and deny the Word of God. They insist that they are the only ones who are right and only they have all the correct and appropriate doctrines. Their words are hollow and they do not have the authority of the Scriptures. It is a time for the truth and the faith once and for ever delivered to believers and yet people do not want the old ways, which the Lord tells us to follow, but rather to follow new ways some of which could be classed as sensational although certainly not Biblical.

The day of reckoning was coming for these false prophets as it will for all false prophets. Micah declares that they will not be able to divine any more. They would live in darkness and not be able to see. Day would become night for these evil prophets. The word that describes the prophecies of these

false prophets is *kasam*, a word only used of magic, soothsayers and necromancy and the use of mediums. It is never used of real prophecy. These false prophets shall be put to shame and, as diviners, they would be judged. They had claimed to be spokesman for Jehovah but now they will be exposed for what they are.

The same fate will await the false prophets of today and if one examines the teachings of some of these people one can only despair at such falsehoods. The final chapter of the New Testament gives a stern warning against those who add or take away from what the Bible says.

In verse 8, Micah declares himself to be a true prophet because the Spirit of Jehovah is in him and he is telling both Israel and Judah of their sins and transgressions. There are no platitudes in his speaking. His mission was to bring God's people to their knees admitting their sins. There is a need of men like Micah today.

We turn now from the prophets to the civil leaders who will not administer justice but have perverted it. Some of the injustices led to deaths and the shedding of innocent blood but, as other prophets have said, they had no sense or regard for social justice. Their prosperity and lavish houses were paid for by their persecution of others.

In verses 11 and 12, Micah identifies the root cause of most of these problems and that cause is money. Those responsible for the law were subject to bribery and personal gain. They would allow any improper action if they could make a financial gain. The priests were no better. As Malachi 2. 7 states they were to teach the Torah for the benefit of all and in the fear of God. Yet they were charging for their services and sought a fee for any consultation. There are organisations that do this today with words such as, If you want my help, you will have to pay for it. These prophets would only prophesy for money and say what the people wanted to hear, but they would not reveal the will of Jehovah.

In our day they are churches, maybe the majority of them, would do not uphold the faith once and forever delivered to the saints, nor follow the old ways recommended by the Lord and do not teach Biblical truth.

I went to a church recently and the subject of the sermon was given in advance, Are doughnuts more enjoyable than going to church?

The people of Micah's time stated that Jehovah was in the midst of them and so no judgment would come upon them. But, because of their conduct, destruction would fall upon Jerusalem, also known as Zion. The wicked people had a false confidence. Their hypocrisy was intolerable to the Lord. Micah uses some sarcasm when he says, For your sake Zion shall be ploughed as a field. It was because of sin that Zion would be ploughed as a field and the holy city would be reduced to rubble. Micah's prophesy was quoted by Jeremiah (chapter 36. 18). The hill of Moriah where the temple had stood in its glory would become a forest.

Chapter four

In amongst the details of the destruction of Jerusalem, we have welcome news of a forthcoming age of blessing described as being in the latter days, a term used with regard to the last days and the second coming and following events.

Moriah was the highest mountain in the country upon which the original temple was built. In a day to come, the temple will be rebuilt at that location and people will flock to it. It should be noted that the temple is not a centre for worship but as a revelation of God. The nations will flock to it because God will be there. People will come for instruction and learn to walk in God's paths. Righteousness will issue from Jerusalem. This is at the time of the millennium, Christ's thousand year reign on earth (Revelation 5. 3 ff)

Verses 3-4 remind us that the rulers, judges and priests of Micah's time has shown their worthlessness. But in a day to come, a Supreme Judge will rule in righteousness, His rule even extending to other nations who will gladly submit to His authority. Swords and spears will be replaced by domestic implements. There will be no war or conflict since the Lord will establish peace and security. for His thousand year reign. Every man will sit under his own fig tree or vine, a picture of happiness, relaxation and peaceful tranquillity. Fear will be no more in this literal reign of Jehovah on the earth. This is the Messianic era (Revelation 5).

The modern church is often astray. We are to earnestly contend for the faith once and for all ever delivered by the saints (Jude 3) and to walk in God's ways (Psalm 28, 1, Isaiah 30.21, 1 John 1 5-7). Nor are we to add new doctrines as the last chapter of the Bible warns us. In view of our testimony and the second coming we must adhere to such things.

People of other nations who worship other gods and who will reflect both the characteristics of their religion and culture but, by contrast, Judah will fix her eyes upon Jehovah who, in days to come, they will follow Him for ever and ever. There is a future for God's people and it will be a glorious one.

The compassion of the Lord is shown in the next two verses. As in Zephaniah 3.19, He will assemble the lame and this may be a reference to their forefather Jacob whose descendants were often considered spiritually lame. The Lord will gather them together as a remnant which word usually refers to those who have remained faithful to Jehovah. We read that God is full of compassion, which compassion does not fail. We have only to look at the compassion of Christ to see this (Mark 1.41, 5.19. Luke 7.11)

In the dispersion, the Jews suffered. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the people were subjected to many indignities and abuse. The old were left to die in misery. The able-bodied were driven like cattle into exile rigorously and many died en route. Women and children were often left by the wayside. Those who arrived were usually bruised, broken and exhausted and probably a small percentage of those had started the journey.

Verses 11 to 13 speak of the nation's fate which would attract the attention of the heathen nations. There was no pity for the doomed nation which had been holiness unto the Lord but now was to become the laughing stock. Even in our times the Jews are subject to abuse and ridicule but for the surrounding nations to say that the Jews did not know the ways of Jehovah neither did the heathen nations. They did not realise that God was gathering them together in the threshing floor to be flailed and trodden down. Nor did they realise that their own fate would be sealed.

The prophet reminds us of the oxen treading down the corn (Deuteronomy 25.4).There is a picture here of the day when Judah will tread down her enemies. Judah's hoofs would be as strong as military bronze and the horn to toss the chaff would be of iron. They would trample down and break in pieces their foes.

And the Divine purposes cannot be frustrated. In recent times Israel has been condemned for defending itself against their enemies but, ultimately ,they will be victorious and defeat all their enemies. The world will see the power and authority of God and all the enemies and those who hate the Jews will be humbled and pay for their hatred of God's people. It is deplorable that in the politics of the UK we have those who hate Jews and are also atheists. But one day all of these will bow the knee to the Lord Jesus and be humiliated for their oppression of God's people.

Chapter five

The first verse belongs to the end of chapter four since it probably deals with the siege of Jerusalem who is regularly called daughter. The ruler of God's people is also called the Judge of israel who will be smitten on the cheek with a rod. That Judah and Israel are often synonymous with each other it may be difficult to interpret this passage.

The second verse is one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible telling the location of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem Ephratah. There was another Bethlehem of the tribe of Zebulun but the town of which Micah spoke was a smaller town known as the town of David (1 Samuel 17.12) and his ancestors. When Herod asked where this Child was to be born he was told, 'In Bethlehem of Judea for as it is written in the prophets, And you, Bethlehem in the land of Judah are not the least among the princes of Judea for out of you shall come a Governor, who shall rule my people wisely (Matthew 2. 4 to 6) .Micah goes further and says of this Child that His goings forth have been of old, from the days of eternity. He was from eternity since He is the Eternal Word of God who became flesh, became a person, since a person has a body of flesh and bones, whereas a Spirit does not have a body and cannot be called a person although some call the Trinity three persons.

This small town was to be the birthplace of the One who one day to rule all Israel although many would have thought that Jerusalem should be the birthplace of the Messiah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

A criticism of this book is that the prophet flits from one subject to another but this particular prophecy is of immense importance.

Micah returns to things of his time. Because of Judah's apostasy and infidelity that He will give them up until the time when the remnant will return from exile. He likens this to a woman awaiting the birth of her child (verse 3).

Verses 4 to 6 returns to the Messiah as shepherd caring for His flock and when He shall govern at a later time. He will provide their every need, protect them from danger, leading them into the best pasture, healing their wounds satisfying their thirst and would be the Good Shepherd. They will dwell in peace and security.

There is now a reference to the Assyrians who would ravage the palaces and strongholds and how the Jews will raise up seven shepherds and eight princes from among the men. This probably refers to the future as indicated by the King of the north (Daniel 11 40 -45). The land of Nimrod would be taken by the Jews. Nimrod was the founder of Babylon. The reference to seven and eight may not mean much but indicates the strength of the victors and leaders of Israel. All the enemies of God including atheists and the anti Semetic individuals will be defeated and humiliated. -All the UK politicians who are pro-Arab and hate the Jews will be utterly discredited.

Verses 7 to 9 refers to the scattering of the Jewish people among many nations following the fall of both Samaria and Jerusalem by the Assyrians and Babylonians respectively. They are often called the remnant.

Micah is here speaking of a time to come when Israel will be a nation again and be mightily blessed as dew from Jehovah and as fresh showers upon the grass. The title Israel refers to both the Old Testament kingdoms of both Israel and Judah. Israel will be established as the supreme nation upon the earth because the Lord Jesus will be the Supreme Ruler. This revived nation will be called the remnant of Jacob and the word remnant often refers to those who will turn to God in repentance and be saved. It is interesting to note that when Jacob received blessing, it was described as the dew from heaven (Genesis 27.28). The dew was essential to prevent the ground being dried up, plants being scorched and vegetation withered.

Israel had been like a lion among the beasts of the forest or a young lion among a flock of sheep, displaced or in the wrong place. The Jews will trample down the many nations as a lion tears its prey. The Lord's people will ultimately be victorious over all their enemies. The word heathen is implied here and describes those who do not believe in the God of the Bible, the Lord Jesus and also to those who hate the Jews.

Verses 10 to 15 continues with the forecast of the blessing for Israel and the destruction of all things that Israel relied on rather than acknowledge the all-sufficiency of God. All military supplies and

armaments used to defend themselves will no longer be required. And their ridiculous beliefs in witchcraft, mediums, spiritualists and other idolatry would be no more. The victory over all the enemies would be achieved by Messiah Himself. All idols will be no more and the cities that majored on such idolatry would also be destroyed and the worship of false gods would be no more.

Jeroboam I had introduced the worship of the golden calves in the northern kingdom which idolatry had been adopted by the southern kingdom. This was a gross insult to Jehovah. There were also pillars of wood and metal to the goddess of nature (Exodus 34,13, Deuteronomy 16.21ff and 27.15).

The Lord would root out the Asherim and their cities. Asherim means groves noted for its wooden posts close to the altars of these false deities representing the goddess Asherah or Ishtar whom the people had been told by God to destroy when they entered the Promised Land (Exodus 34.13)

Divine punishment would be meted out to all heathen nations because they persecuted God's people. We read in Jeremiah 10. 7 that Jehovah is the King of al Nations. That will be.

Chapter six

Micah likens the mountains and hills to an independent jury and Jehovah has called the nation to Court and acts as both prosecutor and defendant. The mountains are often used in Scripture to witness events in Israel's history, or to rejoice on blessing or listen to Divine proclamations (Deuteronomy 32.1, Isaiah 1. 2, 44.23, 49. 13, 55,12 etc). The Lord has a controversy with His people and, in this lawsuit, He invites Israel to plead her case and this speaks of Isaiah 1. 18 where the Lord says to His people, Come now and let us reason together though your sin be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as white as wool. God had every right to be full of indignation and anger towards His wicked and idolatrous people. Instead He here uses tender expressions and requests an answer to His questions, What wrong have I done to you and how have I wearied you? He wants to know how he has tried their patience. He had redeemed them from the bondage of Egypt and given them leaders such as Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The people owed their nation to Him and they should show Him their thankfulness. There is a warning here for us. Do we value what Christ has done for us? Do we now accept it but also show ingratitude and ignore the style of life He directs that we are to follow? Going to meetings to worship and remember Him does it really mean something? Why is it that modern churches and fellowships do not adhere the ways that the Lord has established and become worldly and trendy? Self expression and doing things our way is not the Lord's way. We are not to preach self and talk about ourselves and what we have done (2 Corinthians 4. 5) In all things Christ must have the pre-eminence (Colossians 1.18), note carefully HE MUST. Christian worship is the worship of Christ. In some modern churches the pastor is idolised, the pop group are admired and sometimes almost hysterically and someone may talk about their holiday in Kenya and how doughnuts are more tasty than going to church, what was discussed at Conference and how three year old Jenny has spoken in tongues, how Mrs Jones used the her gift of healing to cure Daisy of her terminal cancer followed by a rapturous round of applause and cheering.

I have listened to all such things with the emphasis on people and not the Lord. Verse 5 shows us that the Lord not only provided protection and leadership from Egypt to Canaan but quotes, as an example, the story of Balak, king of Moab, and for the second time used the tender expression, O my people .In Canaan, Israel was attacked by the Amorites but defeated them and moved on to the Moabite plain near Jericho. The Midianites and the Moabites got together to determine what to do about the invasion of their lands. They consulted a soothsayer named Balaam to lay a curse upon Israel and Balak would financially reward him. Ultimately , Balaam used pagan women to seduce Israel, an evil scheme which proved successful (Numbers 25, 1 - 8,. 31. 16). Balak dismissed Baalim. Numbers 25. 1 states that Israel stayed in Shittim, the last station before they crossed the river Jordan and the sexual immorality took place. The Lord punished them severely (Numbers 25. 4-9) but did not reject them. The curse was rolled away at Gilgal and circumcision was reintroduced (Joshua 5. 3-9).

Jehovah's requirements are set out in verses 6 to 8 and shows that the people did not understand Him and had neglected Him so long and did not appreciate Him. Did the Lord want His people to come before Him with burnt offerings with ten thousand rams and a plentitude of oil? Should they sacrifice their firstborn to atone for all their sins? Sarcasm is here. God is satisfied with nothing less than holiness in man (Exodus 19.6, Leviticus 11. 44. 19.2) and, before the usual complaint is made that this is Old Testament, see 1 Peter 1 15-16.

What did the Lord require of His people? What does he require of us?

To exercise justice, which implies more than the letter of the law, and to set right whatever is wrong and, in daily life, walking in integrity and faithfully before God. To love mercy and kindness which means unselfish deeds and consistent performances of acts of kindness to others. To walk humbly means personal conduct of modesty with personal purity and chastity. There is no room for self promotion and pride.

Verse 9 is important. The voice of Jehovah was to denounce the city for both its evil ways and idolatry and how the people should heed what He says and realise that the rod of punishment was necessary. There is also the message to revere Him and His Name.

Reverence is missing from so many churches and fellowships today. How often were people to take off their shoes for they stood on holy ground? The fear of God was the respect to be shown to Him at all times and Habakkuk 2.20 reminds who the Lord is and that the earth should be silent before Him. Isaiah 30. 15 tells us that in quietness and confidence is our strength but people took no notice. It is the same today. There must be reverence shown to the Lord Jesus and to the Word of God (Proverbs 30.6, Revelation 22. 19). But these essentials are not heeded today.

Ernest Lloyd of Christian Witness to Israel was invited to speak at a meeting in South Africa. The meeting began with 45 minutes of modern songs, a very loud pop group and flashing lights and the Police arrived because the noise was far too much. Ernest, who had travelled from the UK, was given five minutes to speak and he said that God was not deaf!

As in the prophecy of Amos, Micah now deals with social injustice. The treasures of the traders of Jerusalem have been accumulated by dishonesty and the Lord calls them the treasures of wickedness found in the houses of the wicked. False scales and weights were being used. How could these deceptions be glossed over? Such dishonesty was accompanied by lies, oppression and violence and all of this had to be corrected by punishment.

This is borne out by the final two verses of this chapter. Divine punishment was inescapable. The people were desolate because of their sins and there was no repentance and they had persisted in sin. They had already been smitten. They would eat but not be satisfied and still empty which could easily refer to the conditions of the besieged and starving city .There was no place of safety where they could be put safely away and therefore there would be no salvation and what is tried to be hidden will perish by the sword or become the spoils of the invaders. They would sow crops but not reap the harvest since the enemy would take it; olives would be prepared but they would not use the oil and even when the grapes are trodden they would not enjoy the resultant wine. The people had followed Omri and his son Ahab. Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord to a greater extent than his predecessors (1 Kings 16.25). He built the city of Samaria and founded the powerful dynasty of the northern kingdom with its oppression and injustice.

Ahab was responsible for the devilment of the worship of the gods of Baal and following his marriage to Jezebel built a temple to Baal and erected an altar for the worship of Baal. In order to have the vineyard of Naboth, he had him murdered (1 Kings 21 1-16). It must be remembered that Solomon was evil and built temples to pagan gods such as Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh and Moloch (1 Kings 11 5-7) which God calls abominations. Solomon was an idolater and a womaniser and I cannot understand why some call him a type of Christ.

God is aware of all that we say and do and how our heart is before Him. In the last analysis it is our reverence and love for Him that is the most important aspect of our lives.

Chapter seven

The chapter begins with a woe, an expression only used in one other place in the Old Testament in Job 10.15.

Micah portrays himself and the nation as someone wandering through the fields looking for something to satisfy his hunger. But the harvest has already been reaped and there are no gleanings left. All the summer fruits has been gathered in, and there is nothing to eat. Jerusalem was also desolate in that the orchards and vineyards were empty. The first figs appeared in June and were the most tasty but the final picking had taken place. If anything was left, it was worthless. The situation was hopeless as was the fate of Jerusalem which had no piety (verses 2 and 3). Godly men were no longer on the earth. Neither are there any upright men but there were those who were unkind and indeed cruel to everyone including their own brothers. They wait for them with a net and will even shed their blood. These were days of anarchy and all of this was unacceptable to Jehovah. No wonder that there had to be Divine punishment.

In the UK today, there continues to be a rapid decline in Christianity even among some who call themselves Christians. Secularism and selfishness is the order of the day and even the government is dismissing Christian values and virtues. Marriage has no sanctity and gay marriages are regarded as normal. Television and the cinema is usually violent and contains sexuality and blasphemy. Living together and not being married to each other is accepted; the rights of homosexuals are now paramount. If we speak against homosexuality we are called homophobic and can be arrested and yet people are allowed to speak against Christianity and Christ. Many churches do not preach the Gospel or adhere to sound Biblical teaching; some modern churches call Sunday Funday and gossip over coffee usually after meetings is prevalent and tends to wash away any spiritual content. Fellowship is often mere nosiness and church activities are often worldly and not spiritual. It is true that spirituality and entertainment do not mix.

Many people go to church for the entertainment, the pop music, the dancing and drama and monologues about individuals.

The people of Micah's day commit evil with both hands. Judges and members of the royal household accept bribes. Those in authority and power plot weave their plans to satisfy their evil desires. As a result, they are rightly denounced in verse 4 and Micah states that the day of visitation and reckoning is coming. The people of Jerusalem are like a briar and those who may be considered upright are sharper than a thorn hedge. The rulers and judges who were to protect the people under Jehovah, but their wickedness made them no better than the briar and the thorn hedge as they tore to shreds the people,

The watchmen here refer to the prophets (Isaiah 21.6, Jeremiah 6.17, Hosea 2.11) and visitation was also to come upon them who had not condemned the sins of the people. Is this true in some churches and society today? Are those who preach falsehood and add to the Scriptures or take away from them, false prophets? What will the Lord do to them?

The treachery existed in families. One could not trust a neighbour or have confidence in a friend. They had to careful what they said even with very close friends. In a family, you will find a son who despised his father and the daughter who hates her mother and the daughter-in-law who is against her mother-in-law. Enemies include those in the same house and family. This was because the deceit was universally widespread and everyone could be treacherous. Normally the Jewish wife would never betray her husband but things were different now. Children no longer had respect for their parents. There was active antagonism in the home and social rebellion. We may well compare it to teenage rebellion of today which blossomed in the liberal 1960s.

History repeats itself and, no doubt, such conditions will be seen in future days. As we have stated there have been displays of these rebellious conditions already, particularly in the 1960s.

Verse 7 tells us that the prophet has become the mouthpiece for the faithful in the nation. In these appalling situations of constant evil and rife idolatry, the faithful looked to Jehovah knowing that He will hear their cry. They had confidence in the Lord even though He was to exercise Divine judgment.

What an assurance this is for us today. We can always turn to Him assured that He will hear us in all and every situation in life.

The enemy comes into the spotlight again in the next verse. God's people were fully aware of the threat of invasion and, as a nation, were weak and that the enemies may rejoice over them with malignant joy. There is a message of hope that, although calamity would come and bring the nation into darkness of affliction (Isaiah 8.22, 9.1), Jehovah would eventually deliver His people.

Is this not the case today? We can still trust in God through the trials of life. We may have no answers to prayers which may well be frustrating particularly concerning the salvation of family and loved ones and we are deeply worried that they may not accept Christ.

Verses 9 and 10 remind us of Divine judgment. Because of Judah's sin, it was only fitting that they should be punished. God had used other nations to inflict them and the people did not question His action. They expressed their readiness to bear the punishment which they deserved (2 Samuel 16.10). However, God would plead their cause against the enemy. He would ultimately vindicate Judah before His enemies and protect those in a covenant relationship with Him and, eventually, there would be deliverance and they would be brought into the light.

The enemy had sarcastically asked Where is your God? But He would bring shame upon them as she will be trodden down like the mire of the streets

A Divine purpose is now revealed for the future blessing of God's people. The walls of the city would be rebuilt and the boundaries would be extended between the fields and the vineyards. In days still yet to come, peoples from Assyria and Egypt and from sea to sea will come to view the results of God's blessing. Such an area may be from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and from Sinai to Lebanon and probably from all parts of the world to see the Lord reigning in Jerusalem in the millennium. That the earth will be desolate may refer to the heathen world in general, who, because of their affliction of Israel, will not experience the same blessing on their lands.

Verses 14 and 15 deals with the Shepherd and His flock and seems to be Micah's prayer to the Shepherd of Israel for the people and the restoration of their lands. It is a plea that Jehovah will shepherd His flock with His rod. The rod was used to lead the sheep out of the fold into pasture or to the brook to drink, to protect them from wild animals, to rescue them from danger or to urge them to move more quickly. All of this showed His compassion for the sheep.

The prophet refers to God's people as sheep as living alone in a beautiful land. Living alone is often portrayed in this sense (Numbers 23.9 etc). Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old pleads the prophet. These two provinces were overrun by Tiglath-Pileser II of Assyria in 734 BC and these areas are two that should be restored to Israel. The Divine reply was that Jehovah had delivered His people from Egypt and had continually looked after them with innumerable blessings. His power had not changed nor had His purpose for His people. What He had pledged He would perform.

The following two verses tells us that the nations had relied on their military strength and confidence in their own power. But now, God's arm had reached out over them and the watching nations were both alarmed and ashamed that their own strength was completely ineffective to thwart the deliverance of Israel. They would put their hand on their mouth which was a gesture of reverence and astonishment (Job 21.5, Isaiah 52.15). They were speechless in the presence of Divine power and

deaf to everything else. They were so debased that they would lick the dust like the serpent, an expression of humiliating defeat (Psalm 72. 9, Isaiah 49.23).

Micah refers to them as creeping out of the strongholds to which they had fled because of their terror of Jehovah. They were no better than the worms coming out of their holes in the ground (Psalm 18.45) such was their fear of the might of the Lord. No one and nothing who attack the people of God will be spared His righteous judgment.

The final two verses of this prophecy are verses of comfort and assurance. God is merciful, pardoning iniquity and passing by transgressions of the remnant of His people. He will not keep His justified anger for ever as He delights in loving-kindness. He will turn and have compassion upon His people whom He still loves. He will tread under foot their iniquities and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. His faithfulness will bless the descendants of Jacob and will be seen and the loving-kindness will be displayed to the descendants of Abraham as He swore of old.

This is Micah's hymn of praise to the Mighty One, the incomparable Lord. Who can compare with Him? That some do is an insult to the eternal God. Who else has such love and mercy?

All their sins would be cast into the depths of the sea and I remember Canon Guy King of Beckenham saying, And God puts up a notice, No fishing !

The doctrine of forgiven and mercy is also expressed to the Jews in the anonymous epistle to the Hebrews in chapter 10 and verse 17

Great God of wonders all Thy ways
Are righteous matchless and Divine,
But the blest triumphs of Thy grace,
Most marvellous, unrivalled, shine.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

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