

# INTRODUCTION AND MICAH

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## Introduction

### I. The Minor Prophets

A. Micah, as you know, is one of the twelve Bible books that are known to us collectively as the "Minor Prophets." In English Bibles, they are the last twelve books of the Old Testament. They are called "minor" because they are shorter not because they are less important.

B. As Christians, we need to study *all* of Scripture. It is *all*, from Genesis to Revelation, God's word to us. Paul says in 2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be proficient, having been equipped for every good work." He says in 1 Cor. 10:11 that certain events involving the Israelites in the wilderness "happened to those men as examples and were written down as a warning for us, on whom the ends of the ages have come." He says in Rom. 15:4 that whatever "was written beforehand was written for our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might hold hope securely."

### II. The Prophet

A. "Micah is the shortened form of such names as Micaiah, 'who is like YH(WH),' and Michael, 'who is like God,' which express the notion of God's incomparability."<sup>1</sup> He was from the town of Moresheth, about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Nothing is said about his call to ministry or about his parents, perhaps because they were not prominent. The fact he is identified by his hometown ("Micah of Moresheth") suggests his ministry took place in a different location, probably Jerusalem.

B. The only other mention of this Micah in the O.T. is from roughly a century later in Jer. 26:18. In that verse, some elders sought to spare Jeremiah from a death sentence by citing Micah's prophecy against Jerusalem in Mic. 3:12 and the fact it played a role in Hezekiah's repentance. Their point was that since Hezekiah did not condemn Micah for prophesying against the city, neither should Jeremiah be condemned.

### III. Historical Setting

A. Though he prophesied against both Israel/Samaria and Judah/Jerusalem, the time of his prophesying is given solely in reference to the reigns of three successive *Judean* kings. This may reflect a sense that the Israelite kings from that period were illegitimate.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Z. Brettler, "Micah" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:806.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 40, suspects it was because the contemporary Israelite kings (Menahem [745-737 B.C.], Pekaiiah [ 737-736 B.C.], Pekah [736-732 B.C.], and

B. According to 1:1, Micah's prophetic ministry began sometime during Jotham's reign, which, including the time of coregencies, was from about 750 B.C. to 731 B.C. Micah's prophetic ministry ended sometime during Hezekiah's reign, which, including the time of coregencies, was from about 729 B.C. to 686 B.C.<sup>3</sup> The reference in Jer. 26:18 confirms that he prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah. So Micah is one of the eighth-century B.C. prophets, along with Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries.

C. You will recall that the kingdom of Israel divided in 931/930 B.C. following the death of King Solomon. Israel was the northern kingdom; Judah was the southern kingdom. This division was ordained by God as punishment for Solomon's idolatry (1 Ki. 11:1-13).

D. The eighth century B.C. ushered in prosperous times for both kingdoms.

1. 2 Kings 13:1-3 reports that when Jehoahaz was king of Israel (814-798 B.C.) the nation was oppressed by Aram/Syria because of God's displeasure with Israel. But according to 2 Ki. 13:4-5, God delivered Israel from that oppression in response to Jehoahaz's prayer. He did so through the Assyrian king Adad-nirari, who in 802 B.C. vanquished Damascus, the capital city of the kingdom of Aram, and put Aram under an oppressive tax. In the ensuing decades, Assyria itself went into a temporary decline, being led by weak kings who left Israel and Judah alone.<sup>4</sup> This combination of events opened the door for Israel's and Judah's resurgence.

2. Jeroboam II ruled in Israel from 793-753 B.C., and Uzziah (Azariah) ruled in Judah from 792-740 B.C., the last ten years as coregent with his son Jotham. These kings brought Israel and Judah to a prominence second only to Solomon's golden age. The kingdoms prospered financially and expanded their borders.

E. Unfortunately, as the kingdoms of Israel and Judah grew more economically and militarily powerful, they were decaying morally. In conjunction with a growing embrace of Canaanite religion, the people became increasingly indifferent to their covenant responsibilities, their obligations to God and their fellow man.

1. Ralph Smith states: "Professional prophets and priests of local shrines behaved more like merchants than servants of God. Furthermore, the widespread practice of worshipping

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Hoshea [732-724 B.C.] "usurped *I AM's* throne through assassinations." See also, J. Daniel Hays, *The Message of the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 310.

<sup>3</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Paul D. Wegner, *A History of Israel*, rev ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 533-538. The complexity of the shared reigns is evident in the reconstruction by Eugene Merrill in *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 403-404:

Jotham became coruler in 750 while his father Uzziah was still alive. Having reigned as a functional superior for eleven years until Uzziah's death in 740, Jotham then became head ruler in the strict sense until 735. Meanwhile Jotham had appointed Ahaz as his vice-regent in 744 despite the fact that Uzziah was still alive. Then, in 735, the two became coequals until 731, neither claiming dominance. At that time Ahaz inaugurated his sole regency of sixteen years, which continued until 715. Hezekiah became assistant to his father in 729, served with him until 715, ruled alone until 696, and the coreigned with Manasseh until 686.

<sup>4</sup> Billy K. Smith and Frank S. Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 25.

domestic idols revealed blatant spiritual decay." Regarding the increasing disparity in wealth among the people, he writes:

As Israel's society shifted to a merchant economy and the use of money replaced barter as the basis for transactions, the separation between rich and poor broadened. Unethical merchants were able to increase their profits by using a light weight to balance the amount of a product they sold and a heavy weight to balance the gold they charge for the product. The laws of the jubilee year and the provisions for the helpless – the poor, the widow, the orphan, the sojourner – were all but forgotten. Because no effective system of justice was enforced, the strong were able to oppress the weak.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Waltke comments:

Amos (ca. 775-743 B.C.) gives us eyewitness testimony to the moral rot at work inside Samaria a generation before Micah (cf. Amos 2:6-7; 4:6-9; 5:10-12; 8:4-6). Hosea, who bridged the generation between Amos and Micah (ca. 760-725), testifies that the same sorry situation continued to obtain in Samaria. From Hosea's successors, Micah and Isaiah, we learn that the contagious social injustices that prevailed in Samaria now prevailed in her prostitute sister Jerusalem as well. Egregious injustices by rich landowners against stalwart farmers whom the rich were driving off their land and into an unrelieved, dependent economic status (Mic 2:1-3, 8-9; 3:1-3, 9-10) were producing a shocking contrast between extreme wealth and dire poverty. Dishonest practices prevailed everywhere. Since judges and prophets were venal, the poor had no redress and no voice (6:10-11; 7:1-4a). *I AM* had entrusted political power to the royal court system to safeguard his holy nations against injustices, sanctioned prophets to stand above the judges and hold them accountable to *I AM*, and elected priests to teach them covenant values. But the royal judges "despised justice and distorted all that is right" (3:9); the gifted prophets became hirelings: "if one feeds them, they proclaim 'peace'; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against them" (3:5); and the educated priests only "taught for a price" (3:11). Blinded by their own cupidity, the false prophets saw no connection between Israel's sin and the rampaging Assyrian army, but the true prophet saw the holy Sovereign marching above the Assyrian juggernaut (cf. 1:3-7). When Israel's social safety nets broke, *I AM* himself stepped in to right the wrong and fulfill the covenant curses (6:1-5, 13-16). The nation that bore *I AM*'s name looked religious as it thronged the temple and offered lavish gifts to buy off *I AM* (6:1-8). But because they replaced the moral covenant, which mandated love to God (Deut 6:5) and love for neighbor (Lev 19:18), with a covenant among the powerful to despoil the weak, judgment was inescapable.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Waltke, 3-4.

## IV. Form and Structure

A. The book is a collection of oracles delivered on different occasions that have been put together by Micah or a later inspired editor of the book. There is scholarly disagreement about the overall structure of the arrangement, but Waltke and others conclude that the oracles have been arranged in three cycles of doom and hope: 1:2– 2:13; 3:1–5:15; 6:1–7:20.<sup>7</sup> (Micah 5:1-15 in English versions = 4:14–5:14 in Hebrew versions.)

B. Luther complained about the prophets: "They have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make head or tail of them or see what they are getting at."<sup>8</sup> Raymond Dillard and Tremper Longman remark, "No prophet illustrates this statement better than Micah."<sup>9</sup> Waltke states:

These abrupt transitions reflect the manner in which the prophet or his disciples edited the book. About twenty once-independent oracles comprise the book. . . . The book is Micah's file of sermons delivered on different occasions. But his sermon files have been skillfully fitted together like pieces of a rose window in a cathedral, pieced together by catchwords and logical particles. . . . Micah's "rosette window," while containing distinct pieces, has an artful coherence proclaiming *I AM's* covenant. On the one hand, the faithful covenant partner, *I AM*, will fulfill his threatened curses if unfaithful Israel does not repent. On the other hand, as a faithful covenant keeper, he will cleanse his unfaithful partner by hurling their iniquities into the depths of the sea if they return to him.<sup>10</sup>

C. The Book of Micah is written largely as Hebrew poetry. Indeed, most English translations that distinguish prose from poetry in their formatting indicate that all but the first verse is poetry. Stephen Dempster says, "The oracles of Micah provide excellent examples of Hebrew poetry virtually from the beginning of the book until the end. There may be a few lines of prose here and there (e.g., 1:1; 3:1a; perhaps 2:5), but the main core of the book is verse."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Those who agree the major divisions of the book are 1:2-2:13, 3:1-5:15, and 6:1-7:20 include Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 260-261; William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 272; Thomas E. McComiskey and Tremper Longman III, "Micah" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 8:499; Hays, 311; Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 647-648; Robert L. Hubbard and J. Andrew Dearman, *Introducing the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 356-359.

<sup>8</sup> Waltke, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 397.

<sup>10</sup> Waltke, 13-16.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen G. Dempster, *Micah*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 39-40.

## The Text

### I. The Superscription (1:1)

**The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.**

A. Micah is a messenger of God, one to whom the word of the LORD was given. The statement that he "saw" the revelation may indicate that word came to him as a vision, so that he "describes future events as though they are unfolding before his eyes."<sup>12</sup>

B. As I indicated, the fact he is identified as "Micah of Moresheth" suggests his ministry took place in a different location, probably Jerusalem. His prophetic ministry began sometime during Jotham's reign (750-731 B.C.) and ended sometime during Hezekiah's reign (729-686 B.C.).<sup>13</sup>

C. Regarding the objects of his prophecy, McComiskey and Longman state:

The prophecy of Micah is directed primarily toward Samaria and Jerusalem, the capital cities of the northern and southern kingdoms (Israel and Judah). While Micah's message is applicable to all the inhabitants of these kingdoms, he singles out the capitals because the leaders of these centers of influence are largely responsible for the social ills of that time (1:5-7; 3:9-12). In particular he singles out Jerusalem, not only because of the corruption of its leaders, but also because of its future glory – a central motif in the prophetic theology of hope.<sup>14</sup>

### II. Judgment and Future Restoration (1:2-2:13)

A. The coming judgment, focus on Samaria/Israel (1:2-7)

**<sup>2</sup> Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. <sup>3</sup> For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. <sup>4</sup> And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. <sup>5</sup> All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? <sup>6</sup> Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. <sup>7</sup> All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, for from the fee of a prostitute she gathered them, and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return.**

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<sup>12</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 501.

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>14</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 501.

1. The Lord summons all the peoples of earth to bear witness against them through his revealing his coming judgment on Israel and Judah. "God's judgment against his own people was to be a witness against the nations. It is a guarantee that ultimately they will be judged for their sin; for if God does not fail to judge his own people, he will certainly judge those who do not belong to him."<sup>15</sup> By first identifying the nations, the people of the world, as the objects of the coming message of judgment, even though they were only the secondary recipients of the message, he certainly captured the attention of the Jews. They would have been all ears for what God had in store for them.<sup>16</sup>

2. Micah pictures God coming down from his holy dwelling place to tread upon the "high places" of the earth. The phrase probably is a double reference to the heights of the earth, the mountaintops, and the pagan shrines of the land that were built on elevated sites. McComiskey and Longman state, "Micah envisions God as the majestic Sovereign who steps from heaven into the course of human events. Samaria and Jerusalem cannot stand before the might and power of the Conqueror who strides upon the heights of the earth and before whom the pagan sanctuaries crumble as the mountains melt."<sup>17</sup>

3. The coming judgment is "for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel," suggesting that Jacob in this instance refers to the northern kingdom. Israel is to be judged for its rebellion against God. The transgression of Jacob is then further described as Samaria. As the capital of the nation, the seat of its leadership, it bears a distinctive culpability for the wickedness of the kingdom.

4. Verse 5c adds, "And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?" Though the immediate focus is on Israel, Judah is also in rebellion and will be brought to judgment. In saying the "high place" of Judah is Jerusalem the point is that Jerusalem, the heart of the nation, is a hotbed of idolatry, a place littered with shrines of pagan cults. Stephen Um comments:

[I]t's not as though God's people abandoned believing in God. They didn't say, "You know, I'm going to stop believing in Yahweh." That's not how it works, even for us as modern Christians. We don't say, "Well, I'm going to stop believing in Jesus." But the danger is not necessarily that sort of atheistic idolatry, but adultery, that is, "Hey, I liked the things I liked, the benefits that God gives me. I like all the privileges of the Gospel that come with being in union with Christ. But you know what, I'm attracted to these other things as well; my heart is drawn to other objects of my affection." And this is what was going on. They saw other pagan gods and they said, "You know, we're going to participate in that as well." So scholars will refer to this as syncretism. So they would worship the living God, Yahweh, and they would even make sacrifices to him, but then they would also follow other pagan gods.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 503.

<sup>16</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 417.

<sup>17</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 503-504.

<sup>18</sup> Edited transcript of podcast, "[Stephen Um on Teaching Micah.](#)"

5. After noting the culpability of Jerusalem/Judah, he returns the focus to Samaria/Israel, declaring that he is going to destroy Samaria. Samaria's idols, the carved images, that had been made from "wages," from money received from the idol worshipers, will be beaten to pieces, burned, and laid waste. These donations from idol worshipers are analogized to money given to a prostitute because they are funds related to a sinful spiritual union, whereas a prostitute's fee is related to a sinful physical union.

6. The money from the idol worshipers in Samaria, the fee of their spiritual prostitution that is represented in the value of the idols and shrines, will be recycled as the fee of a prostitute when the pagan armies ransack the city. McComiskey and Longman state, "The wealth that accrues to Samaria from her idolatry will be taken away from her to be used again for the wages of prostitution – i.e., the invading Assyrians will transfer the wealth of Samaria to their own temples, where it will again be used for idolatrous worship."<sup>19</sup>

#### B. Micah's lament (1:8-9)

**<sup>8</sup> For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make lamentation like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches. <sup>9</sup> For her wound is incurable, and it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem.**

1. The ferocity of the coming judgment is highlighted by Micah's reaction to the vision. Though the judgment is deserved, it is heartbreaking to see the devastation the people have brought on themselves. He says he will lament/weep and wail. His grief will be expressed so convulsively that he will sound like the howling of jackals the screeching of ostriches (or owls). His going stripped and naked seems to be a sign of the coming defeat and humiliation,<sup>20</sup> a prophetic mimicking of the people being deported as captives of war.<sup>21</sup>

2. 2 Kings 17:1-6 reports the fall of Samaria and the deportation of its people in 722-721 B.C. Sargon II succeeded Shalmaneser V as king of Assyria right around this time, and there is some uncertainty about Sargon's role in the actual fall of Samaria, though he certainly claims credit for it some years later.

3. Micah's great lamenting is not only for the coming destruction of Samaria revealed in vv. 6-7, which he says is irreversible ("her wound is incurable") but also, and perhaps mainly, for the fact Jerusalem has come to share in her sentence. Samaria's incurable wound has reached his own people in Judah.

#### C. The coming judgment, focus on Jerusalem/Judah (1:10-16)

**<sup>10</sup> Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all; in Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust. <sup>11</sup> Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame; the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come out; the lamentation of Beth-ezel shall take away from you its standing place. <sup>12</sup> For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good, because disaster has come down**

<sup>19</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 505.

<sup>20</sup> James Luther Mays, *Micah*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 54.

<sup>21</sup> Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 192.



**from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish; it was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel. <sup>14</sup> Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth-gath; the houses of Achzib shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel. <sup>15</sup> I will again bring a conqueror to you, inhabitants of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam. <sup>16</sup> Make [yourself] bald and cut off your hair, for the children of your delight; make [yourself] as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile.**

1. "Tell it not in Gath" was uttered by David 2 Sam. 1:20 in reference to Israel's crushing defeat by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, the battle in which both Saul and Jonathan were killed. In the days of Micah, that phrase suggested such a devastating defeat that it should be kept from Judah's enemies lest they rejoice and jeer. The command not to weep is along the same lines. That would publicize to the surrounding nations the humiliation of the great defeat.

2. Micah apparently sees the coming invasion of Judah by the Assyrians, the invasion by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. that came right to the gate of Jerusalem. The towns he pictures as suffering the throes of invasion and conquest, including his hometown (Moresheth-gath), are all in the area southwest of Jerusalem. McComiskey and Longman state, "In historical retrospect, we can see that these cities are chosen because they are likely the ones subdued by the Assyrian king Sennacherib during his campaign in Palestine in 701 BC as he worked his way toward Jerusalem."<sup>22</sup> In his own records of that campaign, Sennacherib boasted:

As for Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke. I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts, and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered [them] by means of well-stamped [earth-]ramps, and battering-rams brought [thus] near [to the walls] [combined with] the attack by foot soldiers, [using] mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out [of them] 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small beyond counting, and considered [them] booty.<sup>23</sup>

Waltke notes, "The forty-six 'strong cities' included the nine mentioned by Micah in 1:10-15."<sup>24</sup>

3. Micah portrays their suffering by playing off the names of the various towns, which wordplay is lost in translation. For example, v. 10b says "in Beth-le-aphrah," which means "Dust Town," they will "roll [themselves] in the dust" as a sign of great mourning.

4. The statement in v. 13b that Lachish "was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion [i.e., Jerusalem], for in you were found the transgressions of Israel" is obscure. Ralph Smith states:

In the last part of v. 13 the prophet accuses Lachish as being the starting place for the sin of Jerusalem. The nature of the sin is not identified. Most commentaries

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<sup>22</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 508.

<sup>23</sup> ANET, 288 (from Waltke, 7).

<sup>24</sup> Waltke, 7.

identify the sin as that of introducing the trust in horses and chariots into the nation. But the text does not actually say that. "The beginning of the sin of the daughter of Zion" could refer to some Egyptian heresy imported into Jerusalem through Lachish. Elmo Scoggin believes that sin was some form of idolatry practiced in the temple at Lachish. The ruins of a temple were discovered at the ancient site of Lachish in 1968.<sup>25</sup>

5. The statement at the end of v. 15, "the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam," means that the nation's elite, the leading figures of the society, "will flee for refuge in the cave of Adullam where David escaped from Saul (1 Sam 22:1; 2 Sam 23:13)."<sup>26</sup> It will be a time of danger, hardship, and anxiety.

6. The section ends (v. 16) with a prophetic command, probably to a personified Jerusalem (command is feminine singular), to undergo the common mourning rite of shaving her head in sorrow for the loss of her "children," the inhabitants of the Judean towns who have been taken captive to Assyria. Though Jerusalem itself was spared in 701 B.C. by God's mercy, at least in part in response to Hezekiah's repentance at Micah's promise of destruction in Mic. 3:12 (Jer. 26:18-19), that destruction would later be realized in God's judgment at the hands of the Babylonians in 587/586 B.C. One might say the judgment prophesied against Jerusalem in Mic. 3:12 was postponed until the city's wickedness ran its further course.<sup>27</sup>

7. The command to shave the head in mourning is not inconsistent with the prohibition of Lev. 21:5 because that was directed to priests. It is not inconsistent with the prohibition of Deut. 14:1 because that refers to a pagan mourning practice of shaving the head "between the eyes," presumably in a kind of reverse mohawk.<sup>28</sup>

#### D. Indictment of the sins of the powerful ruling classes (2:1-5)

**Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. <sup>2</sup> They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. <sup>3</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster. <sup>4</sup> In that day they shall take up a taunt song against you and moan bitterly, and say, "We are utterly ruined; he changes the portion of my people; how he removes it from me! To an apostate he allots our fields." <sup>5</sup> Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD.**

1. The coming judgment is a result of the ruling classes using their power and influence to cheat the poor of their property, to steal their land and houses. In keeping with their plans, the elites took what they wanted through fraud and other sinful means because they had the economic, political, and judicial power to get away with it. The story of Naboth and Ahab in

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<sup>25</sup> R. Smith, 21-22.

<sup>26</sup> R. Smith, 22; Chisholm, 419.

<sup>27</sup> See, Chisholm, 421.

<sup>28</sup> Waltke, 85.

1 Kings 21 is an illustration. In exploiting their position to take from the socially weak and less fortunate, they defied God, who insisted in his covenant that his people love and show compassion toward one another, regardless of differences in wealth or social status (e.g., Ex. 22:26, 23:4-9).

2. Because of their rebellion, God says he is planning to bring on them a disaster that will be an unavoidable and unshakeable burden, something they cannot remove from their necks, and will be humiliating, something that will prevent them from walking haughtily. When he does so, their enemies will taunt them, moaning in their place about how their lands and houses had been given to foreigners. Waltke comments, "The punishment is phrased as a satirical dirge in the mouth of enemies just as heartless as they. . . . As the strong and mighty in Israel ravaged others by taking their fields, now others stronger than they will take theirs."<sup>29</sup>

3. As a result of the coming judgment, the evil landgrabbers will be cut off from any future hope of the people. Ralph Smith comments:

The lot of the guilty will be completely cut off. They will no longer have any descendants to claim their heritage in the assembly of the Lord. When the Hebrew tribes came into Canaan with Joshua, he divided the land into various sections and cast lots to determine each tribe's territory (Josh 18:8-10). Here Micah seems to be looking forward to a new day when the land of Canaan will be redistributed among the families of his people. In that time Micah says the guilty land-grabbers will have no one to claim their lot, either because their family will be completely decimated or because they will all be in exile.<sup>30</sup>

E. Evildoers deny the message of judgment (2:6-11)

**<sup>6</sup> "Do not preach"-- thus they preach-- "one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us. . . ."<sup>7</sup> Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Has the LORD grown impatient? Are these his deeds?[""] Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly? <sup>8</sup> But lately my people have risen up as an enemy; you strip the rich robe from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war. <sup>9</sup> The women of my people you drive out from their delightful houses; from their young children you take away my splendor forever. <sup>10</sup> Arise and go, for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction. <sup>11</sup> If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink," he would be the preacher for this people!**

1. The powerful who are the targets of Micah's message of judgment respond by telling him, in essence, to shut up. They insist that disgrace will not overtake them and that it was out of bounds even to suggest such a thing. In their distorted perspective, Micah's preaching of judgment is a denial of the Lord's patience. Mays remarks:

They appeal to the very character of YHWH himself. Is YHWH so impatient and short-tempered as to act in anger? The question is really an affirmation that

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<sup>29</sup> Waltke, 108.

<sup>30</sup> R. Smith, 25.

YHWH is 'slow to anger'. . . . That YHWH is slow to anger is an established confessional motif. . . . Micah's opponents find his message in irreconcilable contradiction to a confession of faith which has become their slogan, and turn what is true of God's way into an absolute dictum that frees them from responsibility before God.<sup>31</sup>

2. Speaking for the Lord, Micah responds in v. 7b with a rhetorical question indicating that God's favor and blessing are on those who walk uprightly, who live righteously. But those denying his judgment "treat their countrymen like enemies and steal their property (vv. 8-9)."<sup>32</sup> Their sin, their uncleanness, is indeed going to bring disaster on the land.

3. The kind of preacher the evildoers want is someone who will tell them false words of prosperity, of continuing bright prospects, represented by an abundance of wine and strong drink (or beer). They want to be coddled and falsely reassured in their sin rather than face the lifesaving, repentance-producing truth of God's hatred of sin. This same propensity is evident in 2 Tim. 4:3 and elsewhere. Ben Witherington observes:

[U]nfortunately the heart cry of all sinners is this "please dear God, tell me I am alright just like I am, so I won't have to change. Please can't we just sing a few more choruses of 'Just as I Am' and then I can return to being just what I am inclined to be. Please dear God tell me that I was even born this way, so I can say 'God made me this way', and blame you for my flaws and foibles, and stop wrestling with the troubling possibility that I was born with innate tendencies to self-centered, self-indulgent desires and behaviors." Yes, that really is the heart cry of sinners a good deal of the time, all sinners. Unfortunately, "I was born this way" doesn't mean it's good or God-sanctioned. We were all born with flaws, and sinful inclinations.<sup>33</sup>

4. The man of God tells people the truth they need to hear rather than the lies they may want to hear. That is loving them deeply enough to risk alienating them in order to bless them.

#### F. Statement of hope (2:12-13)

**<sup>12</sup> I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men. <sup>13</sup> He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king passes on before them, the LORD at their head.**

1. The Lord through Micah interjects a note of hope. The humiliation of conquest and exile in Babylonia that ultimately is coming as judgment on the sinful nation will not be the last word. The holy nation will not be expunged. Rather, God will assemble a remnant of his

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<sup>31</sup> Mays, 70.

<sup>32</sup> Chisholm, 420.

<sup>33</sup> Ben Witherington, "A Searching Book— Rachel Held Evans' 'Searching for Sunday,'" (April 15, 2015), retrieved on 5/28/19 from <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture/2015/04/15/a-searching-book-rachel-held-evans-searching-for-sunday/>.

people, presumably back in Jerusalem and its environs, after the exile. The divine project with Israel continues.

2. The return from Babylonian exile is depicted as breaking out of their confinement, their state of captivity, where the figurative wall is breached and the people pour out behind the one who opened the way. It is the Lord God who opened the way through his agent Cyrus; he is the one who is at their head. But in the forefront of the returnees is Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2), the bearer of the royal lineage of David (Mat. 1:13).<sup>34</sup>

3. Zerubbabel is nowhere expressly called a king, but God's promise to him in Hag. 2:23 that he will make him "like a signet ring" is spoken to him as the ancestral representative of Christ. Hays comments, "As a descendant of David and as one who obediently listened to the prophetic word of Yahweh, Zerubbabel apparently becomes a foreshadowing type of messianic figure."<sup>35</sup> So there certainly is a sense in which the title "king" is not out of place. John Kessler comments: "The promise to Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23) assured the community that the promise to David (2 Sam 7:14) had not been removed. The NT sees the ultimate fulfillment of that promise in Jesus of Nazareth, the descendant of Zerubbabel (Mt 1:12; Lk 3:27)."<sup>36</sup>

### III. Indictment of the Leaders and the Future Hope (3:1-5:15)

#### A. Indictment of public officials (3:1-4)

**And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?--<sup>2</sup> you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones,<sup>3</sup> who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.<sup>4</sup> Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil.**

1. "The 'heads of Jacob' and 'leaders of the house of Israel' are public officials in Jerusalem, as the use of the titles in 3.9f clearly indicate."<sup>37</sup> As Mays summarizes vv. 1-3: "The leaders of Israel preside over the administration of justice in the courts for which they are responsible. They flay and devour the plaintiffs instead of hearing their plea."<sup>38</sup> Waltke comments:

The magistrates, who should have known "good and evil," the giving of righteous and compassionate decisions based on *I AM's* law, stood justice on its head. With no taste or passion to preserve the brotherly community, they perversely destroyed it. They took advantage of their position and power to disadvantage the weak, whose only recourse against the venal and powerful men addressed in

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<sup>34</sup> On the relationship between the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, see "[The Genealogies of Matthew and Luke](#)."

<sup>35</sup> Hays, 359.

<sup>36</sup> John Kessler, "Haggai, Book of" in Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 305-306.

<sup>37</sup> Mays, 78.

<sup>38</sup> Mays, 77.

chapter 2 were the magistrates (cf. Isa 5:20; 61:8; Amos 5:10; Pss 45:8[7]; 97:10; Prov 5:12; Job 34:17). Israel's safety net against injustice broke.<sup>39</sup>

2. The leaders are corrupt. Rather than rendering justice as they are called to do, rather than serve as the last line of defense against the sinful grasping of the powerful, they turn their back on justice and facilitate the wrongful taking by the powerful, which destroys and consumes the powerless. Micah says they "hate the good and love the evil."

3. But God is going to turn the tables on them. As they now turn a deaf ear to the pleas of those seeking justice, in the judgment he brings, they will be the ones crying out for help, but he will not answer them. He will ignore them as they ignored the powerless. McComiskey and Longman remark, "Those who violate the stipulations of God's covenant cannot expect him to maintain the blessings of the covenant."<sup>40</sup>

#### B. Indictment of self-serving prophets and a personal defense (3:5-8)

**<sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths. <sup>6</sup> Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; <sup>7</sup> the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God. <sup>8</sup> But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.**

1. The Lord through Micah next addresses the prophets who lead his people astray by not telling them the truth. They facilitate the people's delusion that they are fine in their sin and have no need to repent; they whitewash the true situation. And to make matters worse, they do so from self-interest. If you feed them, if you take care of their personal needs and desires, they will cry "Peace" on your behalf, assure you that all is well. But if you do not feed them, they declare war against you, claim that calamity is in store for you. In Waltke's words, "They gave priority to their sensual appetite to feed their mouths over their spiritual responsibility to speak the truth boldly and vigorously attack sin."<sup>41</sup> He adds, "The prophets cheered the cannibals on so long as they got their fair share of the chopped-up bones."<sup>42</sup>

2. This is a constant temptation and danger for those who purport to speak on God's behalf, whether prophets or teachers. There is a pull to twist the truth toward those who provide for you, whether they give you money or pay you emotionally with things like approval. How many preachers in our culture refuse to identify abortion as the evil that it is and to tell the church that all sex outside of marriage is sinful, that divorce for unbiblical reasons is sinful, that all homosexual conduct is sinful, and that denying and seeking to change one's sex is sinful

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<sup>39</sup> Waltke, 155-156.

<sup>40</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 519.

<sup>41</sup> Waltke, 172.

<sup>42</sup> Waltke, 173.

because by refusing to do so they are paid with praise or acceptance for being kind, thoughtful, and nonjudgmental?

3. According to a 2014 survey conducted by the Pew Research Group, 36% of those **in churches of Christ** say that abortion should be legal **in all or most cases!** And I am sure that number has risen significantly in the last seven years. That has happened because, as the world preaches nonstop that killing a preborn child is a valid, moral choice, our preachers, teachers, and elders, for the most part, have, to apply Waltke's words, neglected "their spiritual responsibility to speak the truth boldly and vigorously attack sin."

4. Having abused their prophetic gift from self-interest, God informs them they will no longer be used as vehicles of his revelation. They will be deprived of that honor, which they had so shamefully abused. In addition, they will be disgraced and put to shame when the assurances of peace they gave to those who fed them are shown to be false. That would happen to Micah's contemporaries when Samaria fell and when Sennacherib swept through Judah, and the situation would repeat in terms of the Babylonian invasion and captivity over a century later. They will be disgraced because their claims of security were their own, there was no word from God to that effect. They are exposed for the prostitutes that they are.

5. Micah stands in stark contrast to these disgraceful, self-serving prophets. He is "filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin." He is filled with what is necessary to enable him to tell the people what they need to hear rather than what they want to hear. He is empowered to declare to them their transgression and sin. He will not say "peace, peace" when there is no peace because he is faithful to his calling.

#### C. Further indictments and coming judgment on Jerusalem (3:9-12)

**<sup>9</sup> Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, <sup>10</sup> who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. <sup>11</sup> Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." <sup>12</sup> Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.**

1. The public officials are said to detest justice and make crooked all that is straight. In a word, they are corrupt, men who pervert the administration of justice by bribery, influence, and lies. They build the city, develop its growth and appearance, with blood and wickedness in that they crush the powerless, some no doubt literally to death, to achieve their selfish goals.

2. The officials, the priests, and the prophets all have been corrupted by money, doing the bidding of the one paying them. And yet, they insist that the Lord will not allow disaster to come upon them. Like the later inhabitants of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 7, they thought

God's special identification with the city would provide an automatic or mechanical protection against any enemies, that God would guard his "turf" regardless of their behavior.

3. But Micah declares in 3:12 that the city will be destroyed, including the temple. The mountain on which the house of God stood would be reduced to a forested or shrub-grown hill. As I noted earlier, Jerusalem was spared from Sennacherib in 701 B.C. by God's mercy, at least in part in response to Hezekiah's repentance at Micah's promise of destruction in Mic. 3:12 (Jer. 26:18-19), but as the moral rot resumed, the city was indeed destroyed in God's judgment at the hands of the Babylonians in 587/586 B.C. One might say the judgment prophesied against Jerusalem in Mic. 3:12 was postponed until the city's wickedness ran its further course.<sup>43</sup>

#### D. A look to the "latter days" (4:1-5)

**It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, <sup>2</sup> and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; <sup>4</sup> but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. <sup>5</sup> For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.**

1. On the heels of the message of Jerusalem's destruction for its sinfulness, the prophet's view is cast to the distant future, to the "latter days." He sees a time when Israel's God shall be exalted supremely such that people from many nations shall give him their allegiance, seeking his teaching that they may live according to his will. This flowing to God, symbolized as their going to the Jerusalem temple, will come in association with the spreading of his word from Jerusalem. I think he is seeing the universality of the gospel as it flows out from Jerusalem after Pentecost into all the earth (Acts 1:8). In explaining the Scriptures to his disciples after his resurrection, Jesus said, "Thus **it is written**, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,<sup>47</sup> and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name **to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem**" (Lk. 24:46-47).

2. He also sees through the church age to the final state, the consummated kingdom of God, which is depicted in culturally shaped imagery that communicates to an ancient Jew an ideal or utopian existence. It is a state in which God has resolved or pacified all human conflict, eliminated warfare, and provided peace and complete security. That is the ultimate lot of his people, who will walk in the name of the Lord their God forever and ever.

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<sup>43</sup> See, Chisholm, 421.



E. Return after the prophesied exile and the restored kingdom (4:6-8)

**<sup>6</sup> In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; <sup>7</sup> and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore. <sup>8</sup> And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.**

1. In take "in that day" to refer not to the "latter days" of 4:1-5, which are a look ahead to the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom, but to the time of Jerusalem's destruction, the time of exile that is implied in 3:12. When Jerusalem lies in ruins, God will bring his people back from the punishment of exile, as indicated in 2:12. And from that nucleus of afflicted, returned Jews, he will make the remnant, the Israel of faith. In the time of Christ, that remnant accepts God's testimony about Jesus and becomes the Jewish root of the church, the root into which the Gentiles are grafted, thereby constituting new Israel. They will be a strong "nation" in the sense that they, as the remnant, are under God's favor and protection. Waltke states:

Micah expands the summit to include *I AM's* reign over restored Israel as a strong nation and extends it into the eternal future. The eternal future for which suffering and faithful Israel hoped has now arrived. Israel is regathered and restored not to its corrupt state of the preexilic period or of even the postexilic era but to its ideal future state. J. L. Mays said it well: "The dispersion will not be transformed into a mighty nation in order to resume a political career that is the expression of their own power and will. Instead, they will become the social unit whose existence and character is a manifestation of YHWH's reign over them." As stated, this vision finds its fulfillment within history in Christ and his church; its consummation lies in the eschaton.<sup>44</sup>

2. The Lord will reign over that remnant, that strong nation, in Mount Zion, that is, in Jerusalem, from that time and forevermore. Literal Jerusalem will be the center of God's reign over his regathered people, the locus of his priests and officials who will mediate or express his rulership. But in terms of the new covenant, a covenant in which geographical holy sites lose their uniqueness (Jn. 4:20-24), Jerusalem as the site of God's reign carries a spiritual, nonliteral sense. It represents the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, as said in Heb. 12:22. It is this heavenly realm of God's presence that is pictured in Revelation 21 as descending and merging with creation in its transformation into the eternal new heavens and new earth. So I think the Mount Zion, the Jerusalem, of v. 7 has both a literal and figurative sense.

3. In v. 8, which is understood by many to be a separate oracle, I think there is another look down the road, a vision beyond the return from exile which is the focus of vv. 6-7. The "watchtower for the flock" and "hill of Daughter Zion" in v. 8 may refer to the fortress or stronghold of Jerusalem that historically was occupied by the Davidic king. NET note states, "As

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<sup>44</sup> Waltke, 228.

the home of the Davidic king, who was Israel's shepherd (Ps 78:70–72), the royal citadel could be viewed metaphorically as the watchtower of the flock."

a. In that light, the "former dominion" coming to that fortress or stronghold, to that watchtower of the flock, is a way of referring to the restoration of Davidic rule, the installation of the Son of David on the throne of Israel. McComiskey and Longman state: "Since the expressions used by Micah have such close ties with the location of David's dominion, the words 'former dominion' can mean little else than that the Davidic kingdom will in some sense be restored to Jerusalem. By asserting so, Micah stands firmly in the tradition of the preexilic prophets (Isa 9:7; Hos 3:5; Am 9:11)."

b. Though Jesus was the unique Son of God from his divine conception (e.g., Lk. 1:35 [Gabriel's words to Mary], 3:22 [announcement at Jesus' baptism]), in his resurrection and ascension, events tied to Jerusalem, he, as the God-man Jesus, assumed in a public way the new God-appointed role of Israel's ultimate king, the supremely powerful Lord of lords. God at that time exalted him to a new stage or phase of his messianic career, as indicated in texts like Phil. 2:5-11, Rom. 1:3-4, and Acts 2:32-36.

#### F. God's faithfulness through exile and assault (4:9-13)

**<sup>9</sup> Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pain seized you like a woman in labor? <sup>10</sup> Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. <sup>11</sup> Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, "Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion." <sup>12</sup> But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor. <sup>13</sup> Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; and shall devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.**

##### *1. Through the exile to Babylon (4:9-10)*

a. Micah sees the coming suffering in the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587/586 B.C. and the exile of its inhabitants. The king, the one who counseled them in royal wisdom in times of danger, has been removed, and the city is in anguish like that of a woman in labor.

b. But in Babylon God will rescue them. He will redeem them from the hand of their enemies and bring them back home, as indicated in 2:12 and 4:6-7. The suffering will give way to new life. God's work through Israel continues.

##### *2. Through the Assyrian assault (4:11-13)*

a. The vision shifts to the Assyrian assault that will take place in Micah's lifetime, perhaps soon after the prophecy. As Waltke notes, the "many nations" assembled

against Jerusalem "are best identified with the international horde of mercenaries that comprised Sennacherib's standing army in his invasion of Jerusalem in 701 B.C."<sup>45</sup> He states, "No source mentions 'great nations' as joining Nebuchadnezzar in his siege of Jerusalem – they are all his victims, but in Isa 8:9 and 17:12-14 'great nations' are identified with Assyria and its conquests."<sup>46</sup>

b. They are encamped against the city, lusting to conquer her, but they are oblivious to the Lord's plan. He has orchestrated their gathering to destroy them. Waltke states, "The pagan throng do not understand that they are in *I AM*'s hands the unwitting tools of their own destruction. *I AM* turns their animosity against him to bring about their defeat, just as he outwitted Satan in the cross of Jesus Christ."<sup>47</sup> So, in light of Hezekiah's repentance at Micah's preaching, God's faithfulness is expressed in his sparing the city; later it is expressed in his bringing them back from exile. Chisholm comments, "Like Isaiah, [Micah] foresaw the Lord's deliverance from the Assyrian threat (vv. 11-13), but he also realized that exile would eventually come (see Isa. 39:6-7)."<sup>48</sup>

c. God gathered Israel's enemies to Jerusalem as sheaves to the threshing floor, as cut stalks laid in the place where valuable grain was to be extracted from them by threshing.

(1) In indicating that he would make Jerusalem a powerful "thresher," represented especially by "hoofs of bronze," he need not be saying he would empower them to defeat the gathered enemies through their own action, that he would fight *through* them rather than *for* them. Rather, he may have been saying, and I think probably was saying, that he would use them as his tool to extract spoil from his (and their) enemies with an exceeding thoroughness, to pound out all the grain, so to speak. It is an image of his utter victory.

(2) Perhaps he commands them to do this threshing, to gather this spoil, because it was all to be devoted to him; they would receive no personal benefit from it. Otherwise, they would need no command to gather it, as is evident in 2 Ki. 7:16 and 2 Chron. 20:25. Scripture is silent about whether spoil was gathered in the aftermath of God killing the 185,000 soldiers of Sennacherib's army.

G. Humiliation will be followed by the Messiah (5:1-6)

**Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. <sup>2</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 coming forth 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**

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<sup>45</sup> Waltke, 258.

<sup>46</sup> Waltke, 250.

<sup>47</sup> Waltke, 259.

<sup>48</sup> Chisholm, 422.

**dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; <sup>6</sup> they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border.**

1. Micah 5:1 speaks of Jerusalem being under siege and her ruler, and thus the nation, being humiliated. McComiskey and Longman state, "Striking a king on his cheek represents the most extreme of insults and marks the victory of Israel's enemies over her (1 Ki 22:24; Job 16:10; Ps 3:7[8]). The king is called 'judge' ('ruler,' NIV), depicting the judicial aspect of his office."<sup>49</sup>

2. I think Micah is again seeing the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem that he alluded to in 4:9-10 rather than the Assyrian assault of 4:11-13. Chisholm states, "The siege is not the one alluded to in 4:11, from which Zion would be delivered. Rather, it is accompanied by the humiliation of Zion's king, a theme present in 4:9, where the loss of kingship is associated with Zion's exile (see 4:10)."<sup>50</sup> This was the beginning of the humiliation and reproach of the exile, Israel's time without a ruling king and of domination by foreign powers.

3. Though God worked powerfully to deliver Israel from its Babylonian captivity, in a kind of second exodus, preserving and restoring the nation as part of his ongoing work through them, there was a sense in which the exile continued. Zerubbabel represented the royal lineage of David (Mat. 1:13), but Israel remained weak, poor, and under the rule of a succession of pagan empires: Persians, Greeks, and Romans. As Graeme Goldsworthy notes, "The return from exile results in only a pale shadow of the predicted glorious kingdom for the people of God."<sup>51</sup> Thomas Schreiner states:

The prophets promised a new creation, a new temple, a new covenant, and a new king. The exile would be over, and the wilderness would bloom.

The great promises in the prophets, however, were not fulfilled when the exile ended in 536 B.C. Israel did return from Babylon and a temple was built, yet the temple was insignificant in comparison to the Solomonic temple. Nor was the nation enjoying glorious prosperity, the kind of glory envisioned in Isa. 40-66. Israel was small, struggling, and under the oppression of former powers. Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi document the low spiritual state of the nation. Nor did matters improve in the four hundred years before the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. Israel was a pawn in the struggle between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. A brief period of freedom dawned with the Hasmoneans in the second and first centuries BC, but the interlude was brief, and soon the Romans swept in and subjugated Israel, appointing the Herodians and procurators to rule the land.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 529.

<sup>50</sup> Chisholm, 422.

<sup>51</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 196.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 44-45.

4. In this environment of unfulfilled hope, this ongoing state of weakness and subjugation, many Jews in the first century A.D., like Joseph of Arimathea, were "waiting for the kingdom of God" (Mk. 15:43). They were longing for the arrival of the Messiah (Jn. 4:25) and the long-awaited kingdom of God, the divine utopia.

5. Micah 5:2-6 indicates that Israel's deliverance from the downfall begun at v. 1 will come by the Messiah, Israel's long-awaited ruler. His coming forth is said to be from ancient days, something that was long planned. He will come forth *for* Yahweh and shepherd the people in the strength of Yahweh and in the majesty of his name, and his greatness shall reach the ends of the earth.

6. According to the New Testament, it was widely understood in the first century that this text was messianic, that it specified the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah (Mat. 2:3-6; Jn. 7:42), the town in which David was born (1 Sam. 17:12). Waltke comments:

[A]s the doorway through which Messiah would step forth onto center stage of salvation history, *I AM* chose the same portal through which David entered to play his role on the stage of sacred history. The common cradle suggests the connection between them and the fact that the Messiah represents a second David and so a fresh start in salvation history through the dynasty to whom God had given an eternal covenant. As out of Saul's death and Israel's humiliation under the Philistine David commenced Israel's former golden age in the sworn land, so out of the humiliation of David's house and Judah's ashes the greater David, originating in the same lowly crib by the same mysteries of divine election and enablement, will inaugurate Israel's future universal and eternal golden age.<sup>53</sup>

7. That the text is messianic is supported by the fact the Targum of the Minor Prophets, an ancient Aramaic paraphrase or interpretation of the Hebrew text, expresses that understanding. Craig Blomberg states:

The Targum of the Minor Prophets very explicitly takes this text as messianic: "And you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, *you who were too small to be numbered among the thousands of the house of Judah*, from you shall come forth *before me the anointed One, to exercise dominion over Israel, he whose name was mentioned from of old, from ancient times.*" . . . Other post-Christian rabbinic literature recognized that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 35:21*), so there is no reason to reject the claim of the Gospels that this information was recognized already in the first century.<sup>54</sup>

8. The "Ephrathah" distinguishes this Bethlehem from the village in northern Israel known as Bethlehem of Zebulun (Josh. 19:15). Kaiser states, "Ephrathah was either the ancient name for Bethlehem (David's father was known as 'an Ephrathite from Bethlehem in

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<sup>53</sup> Waltke, 299-300.

<sup>54</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew" in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 6.

Judah,' 1 Sa 17:12; cf. Ge 35:19; 48:7; Ru 4:11) or the district in which Bethlehem was located."<sup>55</sup> Jesus, of course, was born in Bethlehem, the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah, as made clear in Mat. 2:1, Lk. 2:4-7, and Lk. 2:15.

9. Verse 3 indicates that the distress of Israel that began with the exile will be ongoing when the promised Messiah is born from her, when he arises from Bethlehem. Waltke comments:

The chronological notice in 5:2(3) keeps Israel's hopes pinned on the advent of the Messiah; it helps focus the tableau of chapters 4-5 on him. Once again, the community is thrown back in faith on I AM, who rules history and its times according to his own counsel. With him in whose hands are the times of all people, a thousand years is as a day, and before the remnant gave birth to the Messiah, it had first to endure seven centuries under the continued sway of Assyria, and then of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome respectively.<sup>56</sup>

10. It seems from v. 3b that this king "will effect the conversion of Israelites who theretofore were not numbered among the faithful remnant."<sup>57</sup> In other words, he will bring about a spiritual restoration within ethnic Israel, turning alienated Jews from all tribes to the faith of Abraham, to a trust in God, his word, and his faithfulness to his promises. This "true Israel," of which these restored Jews are a part, constituted the Jewish root of the church, the root into which Gentiles with the faith of Abraham, Gentiles who believed God's testimony about his Son, were grafted to forge new Israel.

11. The Messiah's rule is portrayed by Micah in imagery of his day. He is shepherding his flock in the strength of the Lord, providing his people an existence of complete peace and security, and his reign is universal, extending to the ends of the earth. They are impervious to enemy threats, represented by Assyria, the dominant threat of Micah's day. Chisholm states:

Assyria is an archetype here. In terms that would have been very inspiring and meaningful to an eighth-century B.C. Israelite audience, Micah assured God's people that a time was coming, unlike their own day, when they would no longer be threatened by powerful, hostile nations. In other words, Micah's vision of Israel's future is contextualized so that his contemporaries might fully appreciate it. The essential point is that the new era will be one of peace and security for God's people where God's ideal king prevents the lionlike "Assyrians" of the world from terrorizing helpless sheep.<sup>58</sup>

12. This vision finds its complete fulfillment in the consummated kingdom of God, the eternal state that will come about in conjunction with the return of Jesus the Messiah. At that time, the kingdom he inaugurated at his first coming, which now coexists subtly or non-

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<sup>55</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 153 (fn. 19).

<sup>56</sup> Waltke, 302.

<sup>57</sup> Waltke, 294.

<sup>58</sup> Chisholm, 424.

obviously with the old, fallen order, will be transformed by God into the glory of his eternal vision, the new heaven and new earth.

#### H. The remnant dispersed and ultimately victorious (5:7-9)

**<sup>7</sup> Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. <sup>8</sup> And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. <sup>9</sup> Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.**

1. In the time of the Messiah, the remnant of Jacob, the new Israel that is formed from the faithful Jewish root by the grafting in of Gentile believers, is dispersed among the nations as a blessing pursuant to God's timetable. It is according to his inscrutable working, which is independent of the intentions of mankind. The beneficial influence of Christianity on human civilization, the blessing of its dispersal, is explored in some detail in Alvin Schmidt's book, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), John Ortberg's *Who Is This Man?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), and Tom Holland's *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2019). It led to the sanctification of human life, heightened sexual ethics, freedom and dignity for women, increased charity and compassion, the valuing of universal education, widespread recognition of the need for justice for all, and ultimately to the abolition of slavery.

2. And that body of believers ultimately will be victorious over all enemies by the power of God. That remnant is not only like the gentle and welcome dew and rain; it also is like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which when the time comes unpreventably decimates the objects of its ferocity. On that Day, God's people will fully and finally be lifted above all their adversaries, and all their enemies will be cut off. They will then enter the eternal state of complete joy and blessing.

#### I. Purging of false securities and judgment of the nations (5:10-15)

**<sup>10</sup> And in that day, declares the LORD, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; <sup>11</sup> and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; <sup>12</sup> and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes; <sup>13</sup> and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you, and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; <sup>14</sup> and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities. <sup>15</sup> And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.**

1. The spiritual restoration within ethnic Israel that will be brought about by the Messiah is now described in terms of God purging Israel of its false securities, creating a people who trust in him for salvation rather than in other things. The concept of false securities, alternative objects of trust, is represented by the things in which Israel was trusting for salvation

in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.: human strength, depicted by horses, chariots, and fortified cities, and false religion, depicted by sorcery, fortune-tellers, and idolatry.

2. God is going to destroy these false gods, so to speak, through the effectiveness of the Messiah's call to renounce them. Remember how John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Messiah's ministry by preaching repentance to the Jews. The church, the Messiah's flock, in both its Jewish root and Gentile branch, will be a people whose trust for salvation is in God and his Christ alone. Accordingly, we allow no other voice to command our allegiance, whether it be self-interest or some person or institution. We are the people who declare "Jesus is Lord" and mean it. Waltke writes:

Micah foresees a time when these false securities will no longer exist in true Israel. His vision finds fulfillment in the church of Jesus Christ for which he gave himself up, "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph 5:26-27).<sup>59</sup>

3. Verse 15 is a shift to God's judgment on "the nations," those who are not his people, having resisted Messiah's rule. There are clear echoes of it in Paul's comments on the final judgment. Allen states:

Paul made striking use of the complex of ideas expressed by this line in his delineation of the Last Judgment. Upon those who "do not obey the truth but obey wickedness" would come "anger and fury" (Rom. 2:8). "Vengeance" would be inflicted "upon those . . . who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:8). The context of the latter passage is especially close to the present one in that there God is "justly to recompense with affliction those who afflict you and with relief you who are afflicted" (2 Thess. 1:6f). Both are based on God's compassion for his oppressed people and the necessity inherent in his revealed nature for full justice to be done.<sup>60</sup>

#### IV. Indictment Against Israel and the Ultimate Triumph of the Kingdom (6:1-7:20)

##### A. God's accusations against his people (6:1-8)

**Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. <sup>2</sup> Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel. <sup>3</sup> "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! <sup>4</sup> For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. <sup>5</sup> O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of**

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<sup>59</sup> Waltke, 334.

<sup>60</sup> Allen, 361.



**the LORD." <sup>6</sup> "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" <sup>8</sup> 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, and to walk humbly with your God?**

1. The scene now shifts back to Israel's sin and the situation of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Smith describes these verses as "one of the great passages of the OT."<sup>61</sup> Micah is commanded by God to arise and make an accusation on God's behalf before the mountains and the hills, before features of the earth that are old enough to have witnessed his dealings with Israel. They thus could testify to the truth of his claims if they could speak.<sup>62</sup> In v. 2 the mountains and the ancient foundations of the earth are commanded to hear his accusations against his people Israel.

2. In v. 3 God is humiliating his people in their disobedience, insisting that they explain how he had mistreated them as to justify their dishonoring him in that way. The truth is the exact opposite. He has been nothing but a blessing! He brought them out of Egypt, delivered them from oppressive slavery, and blessed them with Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. He calls them to remember that he protected them from the hostility of King Balak of Moab by having Balaam refuse to curse them and stopped the flow of the Jordan River so they could cross into the promise land from Shittim to camp in Gilgal. He has always been righteous, faithful to his covenant promises, in his dealing with them.

3. In v. 6 Micah expresses the attitude of the people in response to God's rebuke of their disobedience. Their assumption is that the solution to their sin-induced alienation is external and mechanical, that it lies with discovering the right gift to offer God to appease him. They are stressed because they are unsure of what material thing they can offer in sacrifice to curry God's favor, to buy him off. So you get this escalating list of sacrifices. Will burnt offerings do (where the whole animal was offered)? How about a choice offering like a year-old calf? Maybe a large quantity is necessary, like thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of olive oil (oil being an important part of certain sacrifices, e.g., the cereal offering in Lev. 2:1-16).<sup>63</sup> Or maybe, like the pagan gods, he will require the most precious thing one could give, the sacrifice of one's firstborn child. If only they knew the right sacrifice, they would bring it.

4. Micah rejects their suggestion that they are in the dark about what God requires, as though he has left them without guidance on having a relationship with him. He has told them what he requires, but they have changed his requirement into something they preferred, into an external and mechanical action that can manipulate God to the desired result if one knows the right gift to offer, the right divine button to push.

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<sup>61</sup> R. Smith, 50.

<sup>62</sup> Waltke (p. 342) renders the relevant verb in v. 1b, "Make an accusation before the mountains!" instead of "plead *your* case before the mountains." The NIV agrees that Micah is being called to present God's accusation, rendering the clause, "plead *my* case before the mountains.")

<sup>63</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 539.

5. Micah tells them that what God requires, what they have been trying to avoid giving him, is that they do justice (act justly), love kindness, and walk humbly with him. In other words, God wants grateful, surrendered, and penitent hearts that are expressed in transformed lives, lives that reflect his ethics of treating others justly and with kindness. He wants people who live with a spirit of humility before him, people who really know that he is God and that he knows best. One thinks of David's words in Ps. 51:17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

6. The old covenant sacrifices were God's gracious provision for failures of the faithful; they were not tools of divine manipulation for the rebellious. As McComiskey and Longman note, "The prophet is not suggesting that sacrifice is completely ineffectual and that simply a proper attitude of heart toward God will suffice."<sup>64</sup> Rather, sacrifices were acceptable as appeals for forgiveness only when they were accompanied by a proper attitude of heart (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 15:8; Isa. 1:11-17; Jer. 6:20; Amos 5:21-22; Mal. 1:10).

#### B. More charges and the sentence (6:9-16)

**<sup>9</sup> The voice of the LORD cries to the city-- and it is sound wisdom to fear your name: "Hear of the rod and of him who appointed it! <sup>10</sup> Can I forget any longer the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? <sup>11</sup> Shall I acquit the man with wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? <sup>12</sup> Your rich men are full of violence; your inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins. <sup>14</sup> You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be hunger within you; you shall put away, but not preserve, and what you preserve I will give to the sword. <sup>15</sup> You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine. <sup>16</sup> For you have kept the statutes of Omri, and all the works of the house of Ahab; and you have walked in their counsels, that I may make you a desolation, and your inhabitants a hissing; so you shall bear the scorn of my people."**

1. God raises a cry of alarm to the city, presumably Jerusalem, and Micah observes that it is wise to fear God's name. God calls the city, and the nation it represents, to heed the rod of judgment that he has appointed, probably referring to the Assyrians and/or the later Babylonians, whom he uses as the rods of his wrath. God calls them to learn the intended lesson from the predicted judgment on their disobedience.

2. He indicates by a rhetorical question that he will not turn a blind eye to the sinfully accumulated riches of the wicked or the smaller-than-standard measure that sellers used to cheat people, a prohibited practice (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16) that was cursed by the victims and condemned by God. Neither will he acquit the one cheating people with inaccurate scales and rigged weights. In v. 12, he indicts the rich for using violence and deception to take from those who were unable to prevent it.

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<sup>64</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 540.

3. God tells them he is going to punish them severely because of their sins, their refusal to honor him with their lives. Though they are greedy for wealth, they will experience want when an enemy sweeps through the land taking their goods and depriving them of their crops. They are going to reap what they sowed in following in the steps of Omri and Ahab, two notorious ninth-century B.C. kings of Israel (northern kingdom), who abused their power, resorted to violence, and practiced and promoted idolatry. That is not company any believer in God wants to be in.

4. The end of v. 16 pictures the coming judgment. He will make them a ruin and an object of hissing, meaning a hissing sound from someone who is horrified or disgusted. All those caught up in the judgment, precipitated mainly by the wickedness of the elites, will have scorn for the leaders who tolerated and even fostered the society's descent into rebellion. They had a duty and the ability to guide the nation in righteousness, but they governed as faithless men, fooling themselves into thinking they could do so with impunity.

#### C. Lament over a decadent society (7:1-6)

**Woe is me! For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the grapes have been gleaned: there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripe fig that my soul desires. <sup>2</sup> The godly has perished from the [land], and there is no one upright among [men]; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net. <sup>3</sup> Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together. <sup>4</sup> The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand. <sup>5</sup> Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms; <sup>6</sup> for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.**

1. As Micah surveys the moral state of the people, he laments ("Woe is me!") because he cannot find what he wants to find – righteous people. He is like someone looking for clusters of grapes or ripe figs after the harvesters have already passed through. All he sees is a "self-centered ruthlessness and [people] riding roughshod over the lives of fellow Judeans. People were going to any lengths to get the better of their neighbors. . . . Members of the covenant community of Israel were treating one another like warring enemies and wild animals."<sup>65</sup>

2. They are skillful at evil and collaborate in it. The people with political power desire bribes and those with social power have evil designs to cheat and exploit others for personal gain. It is a match made in hell, and together they weave the evil result of injustice and oppression. They are so bad that the best of them are like a brier or thorn hedge, meaning they are barriers that inflict pain.

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<sup>65</sup> Allen, 386.

3. Verse 4b moves to the day of reckoning. The day that the prophets, the watchmen of the nation, had warned about has now come. Waltke comments, "Because the nation paid no heed to these faithful sentinels (Isa 20:10; Hos 9:7, 8; Amos 2:12; Mic 2:6-11; 3:5-6), the day God 'visits' them in judgment 'is now at hand' (Isa 10:3; 22:5; Hos 9:7)."<sup>66</sup> As God's instrument besieges the city, there is a state of panic, one in which the impulse for survival breeds distrust and division within even the closest of relationships. Waltke observes, "The advent of Jesus Christ into this fallen world brought the same divisions (Matt 10:35-39; Luke 12:53) but turned a world where men hate and are hated (Tit 3:3) right side up."<sup>67</sup>

#### D. The godly trust and hope through the darkness (7:7-10)

**<sup>7</sup> But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. <sup>8</sup> Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me. <sup>9</sup> I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication. <sup>10</sup> Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will look upon her; now she will be trampled down like the mire of the streets.**

1. Speaking as a representative of the remnant, God's faithful people, Micah declares that he will look to the Lord in hope through the darkness of the foreseen judgment. McComiskey and Longman state: "As a watchman observes every shadow and listens to every sound, so the godly look for evidence of God's working. To close one's eyes to the working of God, no matter how small the evidence may be, is to open the door to despair."<sup>68</sup>

2. He says he *will wait* for the God of his salvation, thus acknowledging that God acts in his own time and submitting to that reality. He will not give up hope in God's faithfulness despite how current circumstances and his limited perspective may tempt him to do so. God remains attentive and active through Judah's punishment – he continues to hear the prayers of his people – though his working may not be obvious.

3. The faith of the faithful is that God without question will have the last word. So however low the faithful of God may be at any moment in history, whether from their sin or otherwise, however difficult their state or situation, Sunday is coming. They ultimately will be vindicated and glorified. All enemies, all scoffers, all mockers, all persecutors will experience the great divine reversal. God's people will be blessed eternally and all others will be condemned.

#### E. The triumph of the remnant elaborated (7:11-20)

##### *1. Victory described in terms of the extension of the kingdom (7:11-13)*

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<sup>66</sup> Waltke, 427.

<sup>67</sup> Waltke, 429.

<sup>68</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 547.

**<sup>11</sup> A day for the building of your walls! In that day the boundary shall be far extended. <sup>12</sup> In that day they will come to you, from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt to the River, from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain. <sup>13</sup> But the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants, for the fruit of their deeds.**

a. Micah sees a time of God's people as members of a glorious kingdom, depicted by secure walls and expansive boundaries. Gentiles from all over the world, symbolized by Assyria and Egypt, come to this kingdom. McComiskey and Longman remark, "That the Gentiles are to become partakers of the promise through faith is a cardinal doctrine of both OT and NT (Ge 12:3; Am 9:11-12; Ro 9:30; Gal 3:6-9)."<sup>69</sup>

b. He also sees that the earth will be laid waste by God's judgment on the sinfulness of its inhabitants. Waltke remarks, "This verse will find its consummation at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:1-11; 2 Pet 3:10-13)."<sup>70</sup> Divine judgment will cleanse the earth as part of the making of the new heaven and new earth. McComiskey and Longman state, "The prophet can be optimistic, for he knows that his lot is not with the impermanent society in which he lives but with the kingdom of God."

### *2. Victory assured because of God's leadership (7:14-15)*

**<sup>14</sup> Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest in the midst of a garden land; let them graze in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old. <sup>15</sup> As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them marvelous things.**

a. Micah speaks on behalf of the remnant, God's faithful people, and urges God to change their current difficulty, their being isolated from good grazing land, by shepherding them into the rich pasturelands of Bashan and Gilead. It is a plea for him to again lead them into blessing as in the days of old, when he brought them into good life in Canaan.

b. Verse 15 expresses God's response. He promises to show them marvelous things, as he did when he led them out of Egypt. He in his power will deliver them into blessings they cannot even imagine.

### *3. Victory assured over the nations (7:16-17)*

**<sup>16</sup> The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall lay their hands on their mouths; their ears shall be deaf; <sup>17</sup> they shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth; they shall come trembling out of their strongholds; they shall turn in dread to the LORD our God, and they shall be in fear of you.**

a. On the day of God's judgment, all his enemies, who also are enemies of his people, will be thoroughly humbled before him. The nations will be ashamed of how they

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<sup>69</sup> McComiskey and Longman, 549.

<sup>70</sup> Waltke, 457.

trusted in their own might, which they now see was as nothing. They will be so stunned by the glory of God that they will cover their mouths as they gasp, and they will be deafened, presumably by the thunder of his voice and/or the heavenly praise he elicits.

b. Their abject humiliation is portrayed by their crawling in the dirt and trembling in fear as they emerge from what they thought were strongholds. They turn in dread to the Holy One as he prepares to judge them, and they fear him. As the inspired writer says in Heb. 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

#### *4. Victory assured because of God's nature (7:18-20)*

**<sup>18</sup> Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. <sup>19</sup> He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. <sup>20</sup> You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.**

a. Micah's prophecy ends with praise for the incomparable God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The blessing that is in store for his people, the remnant who will receive the inheritance that he has prepared for them, is not because they earned it. The inheritance is not a matter of their achievement. Far from it. It derives from the nature of God, the fact he *delights* in steadfast love, in showing kindness and mercy. He is the very opposite of the caricature our society has painted, a mean God who is quick to anger and eager to condemn, a God who forgives only grudgingly.

(1) When God passed before Moses in Ex. 34:6, he declared, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty [i.e., the unforgiven], visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

(2) This truth is repeated in Num. 14:18, Neh. 9:17, several Psalms, (86:15, 103:8, 145:8), Joel 2:13, and Jonah 4:2. John says in 1 Jn. 4:8, 16 that "God is love." That is our hope; that is our peace. That is why he gave his only Son that we might have eternal life (Jn. 3:16).

b. God will have compassion on his people, those who respond to his amazing love. He will cleanse them in his mercy, tread their iniquities underfoot and cast their sins into the depths of the sea. He will forever be true to the commitment he made to the patriarchs, here referring specifically to Jacob and Abraham.

(1) God promised Abraham in Gen. 13:14-16 (see also, Gen. 17:7-8, 13, 19, 48:4) that he would give all the promised land to him and his offspring, and he would give him innumerable offspring. And the promise was reiterated to Jacob in Gen. 28:13-14 (see also, Gen. 48:3-4).

(2) Regarding the land promise, D. A. Carson notes that as God's revelation unfolds, entrance into the promised land, the land of Israel, is shown to be "a pointer toward entrance into the new heaven and *the new earth* ('earth' is the same word as 'land'; cf. Isa 66:22; Rev. 21:1), the consummation of the messianic kingdom."<sup>71</sup> In Mat. 5:5 Jesus promises disciples (described as "the meek") that they will "inherit the earth" (see also Rom. 4:13). Their future is eternal resurrection life on a new earth, a creation that has been purged of sin and all its effects so as to be the dwelling place of God and man. Donald Hagner states, "The 'earth' (*τὴν γῆν*) originally referred to the land of Israel, i.e., what was promised to the Jews beginning with the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen 13:15). But in the present context of messianic fulfillment, it connotes the regenerated earth (19:28; cf. Rom 4:13, where *κόσμος*, 'world,' replaces *γῆ*), promised in the eschatological passages in the prophets (e.g., Isa 65-66)."<sup>72</sup>

(3) Regarding the promise of innumerable offspring, the NT is clear that even Gentiles who share the faith of Abraham by believing God's testimony about Jesus are children of Abraham (e.g., Rom. 4:11-12, 9:6-8; Gal. 3:7-9, 3:29). They are by faith grafted into the olive tree of true Israel, ethnic Jews who share the faith of Abraham (Rom. 11:17-24; see also, Eph. 2:11-13), and thus are part of the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3). God is faithful to his promises.

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<sup>71</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, editors, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9:164. See also, Blomberg, 99 and Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew, A Commentary, Volume 1* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1987), 141.

<sup>72</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 92-93.