

119

MINISTRIES

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Minor Prophets, Major Messages | Micah: Judgment and Hope

The so-called “Minor Prophets” are a collection of twelve prophetic books in the Tanakh—that is, the Old Testament. Even though they are called the “Minor Prophets,” these books contain “major messages” that remain relevant to believers today. In this series, we will unpack the major messages of each Minor Prophet. We will discuss their practical applications for believers today and how they connect to the Messiah’s work and teachings in the New Testament.

In this teaching, we are looking at the Book of Micah. Let’s dive in.

Micah: An Overview

Micah prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah (Micah 1:1; Jeremiah 26:18-19), around the same time when Isaiah prophesied (cf. Isaiah 1:1). He lived in the southern kingdom of Judah in a town called Moresheth (Micah 1:1).

When Micah prophesied, God’s people had already split into two kingdoms called Israel and Judah, and Micah pronounces judgment upon both kingdoms (Micah 1:1-2:13). He rebukes the leaders in Israel and Judah for their greed and oppression of the poor. Here’s what he says:

Micah 2:1-2

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. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.

Micah also rebukes the prophets and priests of Israel for their corruption. The leaders were taking bribes and perverting justice. The prophets were being paid to give the people false security—telling them that YHWH was in their midst, and so nothing bad was going to happen to them. For these reasons, Micah declares that disaster will come upon them:

Micah 3:9-12

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, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. 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 [YHWH] and say, “Is not the LORD [YHWH] in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.” 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.

In spite of these warnings of coming judgment, Micah reassures the people that there is hope. God promises that, even though his people are going to face destruction and be exiled from their land, he will gather a remnant of them back together (Micah 2:12-13). He also promises that Jerusalem, which would become “a heap of ruins” in the coming disaster, will later be restored. Like Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 2:2-4), Micah declares that a time will come when the nations travel to Jerusalem to learn God’s laws. At that time, there will be peace between all nations:

Micah 4:1-3

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD [YHWH] shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [YHWH], 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 [YHWH] from Jerusalem. 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.

Micah also tells us that a ruler will be born in Bethlehem who will shepherd and protect the people, and that this ruler will take part in Israel’s restoration:

Micah 5:2-4

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. 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. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD [YHWH], in the majesty of the name of the LORD [YHWH] his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

In the final portion of his prophecy, Micah repeats his warning of coming judgment, and again follows that warning with another promise of future restoration. Similar to Hosea and Amos (cf. Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-24), Micah reminds the people that God is not interested in empty religious rituals performed by hypocrites (Micah 6:6-7). What God actually wants is for his people to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:8). Micah goes on to rebuke the people for their unjust and deceptive business dealings and warns of coming desolation (Micah 6:9-16). In Micah’s final chapter, he laments over the sins of his people (Micah 7:1-17), and yet concludes with a song of praise for God’s mercy and covenant faithfulness:

Micah 7:18-20

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. 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. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

Micah's Major Message

Micah's major message is that God will hold his people accountable for their sins, yet judgment is not the final verdict. Throughout his book, Micah's warnings of coming disaster conclude with a message of hope. As the last verses in Micah declare, God pardons iniquity and delights in steadfast love. He is a God of compassion and forgiveness. Micah's statement that God will "cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" is reminiscent of Jeremiah's New Covenant prophecy, which declares that God will write his Torah on his people's hearts and remember their sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34). According to Micah, despite the sin and corruption present in the world and among God's people, there will come a day when all will be made right. Even though judgment is necessary, ultimately there will be forgiveness and peace. Even the nations will desire to learn God's laws.

Micah's message is just as relevant today as it ever was. Our actions have consequences, and God does not take sin lightly, especially when it comes from those who claim to be his people. God literally dwelled among the people of Israel in Jerusalem, but despite the assurances of false prophets in Micah's day, that did not guarantee their protection and blessing. Israel's sins led to God allowing his people to be attacked and taken into captivity as judgment.

Similarly, as believers, we might be tempted to assume that we can escape the consequences of our sins due to being covered by God's grace. The apostle Paul, however, explicitly refutes that flawed thinking:

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

God allows us to face the consequences of our sins. These consequences are not just punishment for its own sake, but they provide us opportunities to reflect on the severity of our sins and recognize how we have hurt others. God's discipline is designed to help us grow and mature in righteousness and love. As the author of Hebrews writes:

Hebrews 12:7-11

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Just as Micah's message of judgment concluded with hope for Israel, we too can trust in God's compassion and faithfulness, even while we are enduring the consequences of our actions. We can trust that when we repent and turn to God, he will "cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

Interesting Connections

Micah declared that the nations would hear and obey God's righteous laws as the Torah went forth from Jerusalem (Micah 4:1-3). This prophecy is beginning to be fulfilled through Yeshua's Great Commission:

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus [Yeshua] came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

As we can see, Yeshua's Great Commission involves teaching the nations to observe "all" that Yeshua commanded. "All" that Yeshua commanded includes his interpretation of the Torah, as well as his instruction to do and teach "even the least" of the Torah's commandments (Matthew 5:17-20). Just as Micah foretold, the Torah shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem (Micah 4:3). As the apostles carried out the Great Commission, they started in Jerusalem and then went "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8), making disciples of the nations and teaching them God's ways.

How Micah Points to the Messiah

Yeshua, who will one day return to establish his kingdom, fulfills Micah's promise of a future leader who will reign in righteousness and bring about peace. Micah said that this future ruler would arise from Bethlehem, the city of David (Micah 5:2). As we know, Yeshua was born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-6).

Additionally, Yeshua echoes Micah's call to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Like Micah, Yeshua repeatedly rebuked the leaders among his people for neglecting justice (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42). He showed kindness and compassion toward the poor and sinners, eating with them, healing them, and forgiving them (Matthew 9:10-13; 14:14; John 8:11). Yeshua also emphasized the importance of having humility and serving others (Matthew 20:28).

Like Micah, Yeshua also taught that even though sinners will face punishment, there is hope for those who repent and turn back to God. In his parable of the prodigal son, Yeshua depicted the consequences of the son's sinful and foolish choices and the subsequent hardships he endured. But the story did not end there. The son returned home and found restoration and forgiveness. This parable reminds us of Micah's message that God is merciful and willing to cast our sins into the depths of the sea when we return to him.

And that is Micah's major message. There are consequences for sin, as Micah made clear in his warnings of impending disaster. But amidst these pronouncements of judgment, there is hope for God's people. God is compassionate, forgiving, and delights in steadfast love. And God's grace is available to all who repent and turn to him.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

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