

The simple story Micah was a Hebrew prophet who lived more than 700 years before Christ. He lived *after* the times of Abraham and Moses and David and Solomon. He lived shortly *before* Jeremiah and Daniel and long before Peter and Paul.

In Micah's day, the Jewish people were divided into two kingdoms. The southern Kingdom was called Judah and had its capital in Jerusalem. The northern Kingdom was called Israel and its capital was in Samaria. Micah's visions and warnings were given to both.

The Northern Kingdom and its capital, Samaria, were judged and fell to Assyria in 722_{BC}. Micah remained strongly influential on the later prophets who proclaimed God's coming judgement on Judah. He is the only prophet to be quoted by another in the Old Testament (see Jeremiah 26:18,19).

Micah is probably best known for his very specific prophecy that the coming Messiah would come from Bethlehem.



Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. Micah 7:8

Read ahead

To get the most from this series, please read through the whole book of Micah at least once to get a good sense of it. (It should only take about half an hour).

Then, prepare for each week's study by reading:

15 November

Micah chapter 1: God's power, holiness, judgement and 'sternness'

22 November

Micah chapter 2: God's wisdom, planning and guidance

29 November

Micah chapters 3 & 4: God of all the earth, redemption, Messiah

6 December

Micah chapter 5—first and second comings of God's promised ruler

13 December

Micah chapters 6 & 7: Israel, the church and you



Micah's message was suited to his country and his age. It speaks also to our own.

The nation was in disarray, misruled by corrupt leaders and unsure how to take its place in a turbulent world. The people were more interested in gathering wealth than in worshiping God. Those who called themselves prophets found it easier to proclaim peace and success than the true message of the LORD.

God's judgement was imminent, and he called honest, bold speakers to proclaim it. These were three contemporary prophets—Isaiah, in a position of influence in Jerusalem; Hosea, in the Northern Kingdom; and Micah, from the village of Moresheth in southern Judah.

Micah prophesied God's judgement on an unfaithful people, but also his mercy. He promised to 'hide his face' from Israel's corrupt leaders, but also to send a 'shepherd' from Bethlehem as a just and eternal leader.

What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

**Hear, you peoples, all of you,
listen, earth and all who live in it ...** (1:2)

**Listen, you leaders of Jacob,
you rulers of Israel.** (3:1)

Listen to what the Lord says ... (6:1)

Kingdom

Jesus's righteous reign over the earth is described in 2:12-13, 4:1-8 and 5:4,5. Search the Gospels for some of the 68 references to "kingdom of God" (and 31 references in Matthew's gospel to "kingdom of heaven") and try to build up a picture of what the term means—now and in the future when Christ returns—and what qualities show someone is living "in" the Kingdom.

7 ways to get more out of Micah

Jesus's birth in Bethlehem is predicted in 5:2. As we approach the Christmas season, read Matthew 2 and reflect that Herod's advisors used Micah to pinpoint the place in which the Messiah would be born—and, in their evil and faithless response, to create a slaughter of babies and infants.

Christmas

Another way to summarise Micah:

The Problem Rulers – no justice Priests – no law Prophets – no true message	The Judgement No temple No rulers No Jerusalem	The promise of restoration New kingdom New temple Prosperity for all Justice and peace
Micah's time	Imminently	Last days

Summarise

Check through Micah and see if you can fit various passages into these headings and sub-headings.

Pray first

Micah shows that a true relationship with God is linked to how we treat one another. He contrasts sinful Judah with God's righteous messianic kingdom to come. Pray for Christians—and Forefront in particular—that we will love God with all our heart, mind, soul and spirit, and love our neighbours as ourselves. Ask for a transformation that we can "act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God".

**But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord,
I wait for God my Saviour;
my God will hear me.** Mic 7:7

History

Micah delivered his messages between 735 and 710_{BC}, though they may have been compiled in writing later. He spoke "during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (1:1). Get a picture of what was happening at that time in the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah by reading 2Kings 15:27 to 20:21. Note v17:6 is crucially important—the crushing of the northern kingdom of Israel (in 722_{BC}) and beginning of the fulfilment of prophecies of judgement by Micah, Isaiah and Hosea (and Amos before them).

Micah's book is sometimes categorised as "the Gospel of Justice and Mercy". In some ways, it foreshadows Paul's letter to the Romans, but Micah uses the politics and public morality of his day as the lesson. Reflect on Romans 11:22, for instance—a verse which could almost be a summary of Micah's message. "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."

Read Romans

Isaiah

The spiritual condition of the Jewish people during this period is recounted by another prophet who was speaking at the same time as Micah. Read Isaiah chapter 1. Note also Isa 2:1-4 and compare it to Micah 4:1-3.



Shave your head in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourself as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile. Mic 1:16