

Micah

Micah, like Isaiah, was a prophet in the 2nd half of the 8th century BC. He began to prophesy just a few years after Isaiah began. While Isaiah's message is described as "concerning Judah and Jerusalem" Micah's was "concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." The two prophets surely knew each other over the decades of their speaking for God.

Micah opens with a lament for God's (necessary) judgement poured out on Samaria, the northern kingdom of Israel, and the sad truth that Samaria's incurable sickness had spread to Judah as well (1:9). As with most of the other prophets there are denunciations for idolatry and the parallel moral failure that justified injustice and selfishness. As with the other prophets, Micah met resistance (2:6) to his unwelcome message of divine justice and retribution. Instead, they preferred a message of peace and comfort (2:11).

Micah's imagery of a remnant gathered like a flock led by a conquering king (2:12-13) is a prophetic glimpse of the church/kingdom of Christ.

Unjust rulers, both political and religious, are excoriated by Micah in chapter 3 as we've also seen in Isaiah and Amos. The corruption alike of political leaders and prophets and priests were going to result in Jerusalem's destruction (2:12). About 100 years after Micah's time his prophecy of the plowing of Jerusalem was quoted in Jeremiah's defense by some leaders in Jerusalem, as a prophecy that the LORD had relented from fulfilling in the days of Hezekiah (Jeremiah 26:18-19). While that prophecy was not fulfilled in the days of Hezekiah, because Hezekiah listened to the prophets, it was fulfilled in the days of Jeremiah.

Micah 4:1-4 repeats Isaiah 2:1-4 (or vice-versa). The message of God's coming kingdom spreading outward from Jerusalem, and it being a kingdom built upon God's will and God's way, a kingdom of peace dependent on the LORD's power, was thus emphatically emphasized for God's people.

The prophecy of Bethlehem in chapter 5 is probably the best known of Micah's messages, but pointers toward the coming of the Christ/Messiah are in chapter 4 as well. Assembling the lame as God's kingdom in Jerusalem in 4:6-7 reflects back on the original assertion of Jerusalem's security in 2 Samuel 5:6-10 and forward to the Messiah's ministry in Matthew 15:29-31, and his church/kingdom in Hebrews 12:12-13. Especially noteworthy too is 4:8, the tower of the flock being a reminder of Genesis 35:21 (tower of the flock = tower of Eder or Migdal Eder). This is the area where Rachel died, and where Rachel mourned for her children as described in Jeremiah 31:15 and quoted in Matthew 2:18. The tower of the flock would've been a raised stone structure where shepherds watched over the sheep on their pasture, which evokes Luke 2:8ff.

We know from Jeremiah 26:18-19 that Micah's prophecies were familiar to Jews of Jeremiah's generation, and respected by them, yet when Jeremiah echoed 4:9-10 they did not listen. Nevertheless, after defeat and destruction in 4:11-13 the LORD's plan would raise up a people who would finally defeat the nations and bring the best to the Lord of the whole earth.

Micah's Bethlehem prophecy, 5:2-5, was recognized by the Jews as describing the coming Christ

in Matthew 2. He, Jesus, fulfilled v3 by bringing in the nations for redemption, the only way to gather “the rest of his brothers” who’d been absorbed into the nations where they were scattered. His dominion as in all the prophets is to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). While the LORD’s kingdom is a kingdom of peace (4:3) it is also a conquering force of unmatched power (5:8-9) not based on the weapons or politics of this world (5:10ff, 2 Corinthians 10:3ff).

Micah’s climactic conclusion is stated in 6:6-8. This is substantially the book of Romans in brief, the Sermon on the Mount, the theme of the gospel. What no person can do for themselves at any price can be received by humbly trusting God and living for him.

Despite all the failures of humanity in 6:9-7:6, the prophet’s hope and ours is securely grounded in trusting God (7:7) and knowing that God brings victory out of apparent weakness and apparent defeat (7:8-10), and the enemies of God will be humbled in their turn, like Jezebel (6:26 and 7:10)

The two kingdoms, of the LORD and of the world, are again contrasted in 7:11-13. The scene of paradise (paradise=an enclosed garden or orchard) in 7:14-17 is like that in Revelation 7:14ff and with reminders of Eden and the Exodus, restoration of the Garden of God for his people, and deliverance from oppression. The casting of sins into the sea (7:18-20) is the very work and purpose of the Christ, as described in John 3:16ff, fulfilling God’s promises through the patriarchs.