

THE PROPHET OF BETHLEHEM, PART 2

Micah 3-7

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We're in the second part of a study in the prophet Micah. Micah is the prophet who saw that Jesus was going to be born in the town of Bethlehem. Nearly eight hundred years before it happened, God gave this prophet the news that this would occur. The prophecy of Micah can be broken into three parts. Chapters 1–2 speak of punishment coming upon Micah's land, the country of Judah, and the promise that concluded that series in regard to punishment. In chapters 3–5, the second part of the Book of Micah, which we look at now, is the theme that Micah gives of hope beyond affliction. Then the last part of the book, chapters 6–7, speaks of grace being triumphant over sin.

Notice as you read the prophets there is a good deal of repetition. Themes have a way of coming up again and again. For example, Micah continually in these sections gives a rather lengthy judgment of God upon the nation for its sin. But he will always conclude with a section of promise. Both in the section of judgment and the section of promise there are overlapping ideas and communication, which is made. We read the prophets as a finished product. When we read Micah it's as if he stood up and began to speak and he spoke for about thirty minutes and out came seven chapters. It wasn't quite that way. What is contained in this book may represent a lifetime of ministry. Or it may represent years of ministry. Or it may simply represent weeks of ministry. It contains the nutshell of his message to the people. I think we'd do violence to the prophetic word if we were to assume that it was a sermon or a book simply written on one occasion. Out of Micah's life came the flow of words, which he preached verbally over the course of time emphasizing theme after theme. Finally when his verbal message is completed

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there comes the moment when the Spirit of God quickens him and causes him to reduce his verbal message to writing. This is because in God's design he wanted us to have it. For Micah is our prophet and his book belongs in our lives.

As Micah in this section on hope and affliction, chapters 3–5, writes, he first of all speaks in 3:1–5:6 of the doom and the destiny of the city of Jerusalem. His message is occurring in Jerusalem. There is a great deal of history yet to be tied up within this city. And we know a great deal of history past.

I. As Micah looks at the Jerusalem of his day in 3:1–12 he brings first of all a message of punishment against the city.

He condemns the courts, the prophets and the establishment in these twelve verses for their perversion of justice.

A. Look what he says against the courts. He introduces them not with the word “courts” but the term “heads of Jacob” (Micah 3:1, KJV). Heads of Jacob, standing for family representative heads, rulers. It is the purpose in Micah's view, and indeed in Scripture, the purpose of government to be the guardian of justice. When justice is not guarded in society then law certainly breaks down. As Micah looks at the judges he says their justice is a matter of butchery. They flay the skin off the poor, eat the flesh of his people, and grind them up at the meat grinders. You cannot get justice in the courts is what he is saying. He indicates that as a punishment against the judges there will come a day when they themselves will cry out to the Lord but he will not answer and he will hide his face from these judges in the time of their travail, because they made their deeds evil.

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This is a theme also stated in Proverbs 21:13 where Solomon indicates that “a man [who] shuts his ears to the cries of the poor...will cry out and not be answered” (NIV). It is the theme that if you do not *dispense* mercy, how can you *receive* mercy?

B. Against the prophets Micah also cries out, 3:5–8. His basic complaint against the prophets is that they have a favorite sermon. In fact, it is a sermon with a one-word title. It is a sermon which they preach over and over again, perhaps using different illustrations but always it is the same thing. It is the word *shalom*. A word which in the Hebrew stands for the idea that everything is going to come out all right. God’s best is coming your way. It’s a wonderful day and you can live and do as you want. Peace. Shalom.

Micah says this message which only emphasizes the loving-kindness of God and does not come to grips with evil and with sin and with the necessity for straightening out your life, this kind of a message is basically coming from those who are speaking for hire. That is, that is the position they enjoy through the financial support of others. Those who come only with the message of shalom—“Everything is going to be all right”—and never come with a word of rebuke, never come with the word of the Lord which routs us out and finds us at our level of sin and our need for correction, there is going to come a time of darkness upon these prophets where in the past they have dined and made out the future. In the day to come they are to have no revelation at all. He is saying false prophets are in it for profit, in contrast to himself. The true prophet speaks of justice. He can be known to be a true prophet because he distinguishes between the right and the wrong. He is filled with the Spirit of God. He declares sin.

C. In 3:9–12 in his message of punishment upon Jerusalem he also speaks against the establishment, the state, the church. In Micah’s time great buildings already exist. The temple of Solomon is a century and a half, at least two centuries now in terms of its glory. There is great

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building taking place. Religious building. Secular wise. Micah is saying, “What is all this building that people are glorying in? Look at the kinds of wages the laborers have been paid to build it.” Micah cannot sit back and simply enjoy the architectural splendor that is rising on the skyline of Jerusalem when he considers the kind of human cost that has been involved in the construction of the city. Therefore he says in a reaction to evil that is occurring within Jerusalem, a kind of bombshell for his audience, verse 12: “Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets” (NIV).

It was like saying there will come a day the Capitol and the White House will be no more and it will be an open field, a wasteland. If we would put Micah in the modern scene it would be as if he stood before the headquarters of his denomination and said, “These buildings will stand no more because of the sin which is present. They will all be wiped away.” It was not a message of comfort. It was not a message that brought Micah a great deal of popularity. In fact, so great was the bombshell of the message that in giving it his own life was in danger.

Words that I read easily and fall rather glibly across my mind were words that when first delivered came at the very cost of one’s life. While Micah deliberated in giving verse 12, which the Spirit had given to him, he knew he took a calculated risk. Once he delivered it his own life was in danger. We know that his life was in danger because in one of those interesting crossover references of the Old Testament we come to the prophet Jeremiah a century later, Jeremiah 26. And Jeremiah in his day was saying essentially the same thing as Micah. He was saying God is going to destroy the city and the temple is going to lay in ruins. An attempt was made against his life. The only thing that saved him was that some of the counselors to the king came along and said, “Didn’t Micah say this same thing a century ago? And did the king then, even though he

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didn't like his words, move to destroy him, but because he was the prophet of God he let him live?" So Jeremiah was allowed to live because Micah had gotten away with it a century earlier. But another prophet in that same chapter, Jeremiah 26, who didn't have the stature of a Jeremiah said the same thing as Jeremiah and he was put to death. These were incendiary words. This prophecy by the way which Micah gives here in verse 12 is so graphically fulfilled and represented in Psalm 79:1 where the psalmist laments after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, "Oh God the heathen have come into thine inheritance. They have defiled thy holy temple. They have laid Jerusalem in ruins."

I think it is one thing to look back on the panorama of prophecy and look at a passage such as 3:12 in Micah and say it was fulfilled and we find its fulfillment in Psalm 79:1. We need however to press beyond that kind of perception to say of the prophecies that are still living and are not yet fulfilled that one day in a point of time that we will look back on the prophecies that have not yet come to pass and we'll be able to say as well, "Every word which God's Word declared did have its final destiny, it's moment of conclusion."

II. In chapter 4:1-8 there is still the discussion of the doom and destiny of Jerusalem but this time the picture changes.

Micah sees Jerusalem in its future greatness. It is a time when God is finished with his judgment upon his people. In the city and in the temple, where previously in Micah's day and the day of the prophets God had been allowed to rule in name only, the time will come when He will rule in reality. And when He will be truly honored and obeyed. From the picture of pilgrims coming to the festival at Jerusalem and ascending Mount Zion to worship and bring their sacrifices at the temple, Micah draws the theme of the nations of the earth pouring into Mount Zion and to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices to God. In 4:1-2 he pictures the flow of pilgrims into

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Jerusalem and the mountain of the house of the Lord being elevated above the mountains of the earth.

I guess you could take this literally or figuratively. If you take it literally you have Mount Zion being about thirty thousand feet in the air. Rough for anyone to climb to offer any sacrifices to the Lord. A prophetic way of saying that the most important place in the world will be the temple of Jerusalem.

We may understand this prophecy as referring to that age when Christ will literally rule on the earth. But we also may take it already in a spiritual sense to say that the church had its beginning in Jerusalem. That on the Day of Pentecost the pilgrims had flowed into the city of Jerusalem and God's Spirit was outpoured and Jesus' resurrection was first proclaimed. That the nations flowed into the city and heard of the elevation of Jesus at Mount Zion at the very temple area itself.

From that flowing in there came a flowing out and the word of the Lord went forth. Even as Micah certain says in the latter part of verse 2 and on through verse 4 that from the mountain of the Lord, from the temple, would go forth the law of the Lord and He would teach men his way.

Finally what comes to Jerusalem eventually is that peace will exist among the nations. Those who have swords will turn them into plowshares. And those who have spears will turn them into pruning hooks. There shall be no lifting up of swords by nations any more against each other.

You look at discussions today on disarmament and you know what a terrible problem the nations have in disarming. No one has yet come up with a way to un-invent war. Here, however, is that beautiful picture of prophecy, which says to us that when God reigns physically on the earth, war is laid aside. He will do what men cannot do. Fitting that Jerusalem, which in Micah's day had been known for its injustice and its oppression of the poor, will in the Day of the Lord become known for its justice. He will decide among the nations. In verse 4 the ideal will come to pass:

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“Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid” (NIV).

Is that imagery that makes you all tingling inside? How would you like to sit under your vine, your fig tree? This was an ideal that was stated during the great reign of Solomon in 1 Kings 4:25. The tranquility of Solomon’s reign is described: “During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree” (NIV). There never was a time in the nation’s history when they came even close to that again. It’s suggesting a beautiful pastoral scene. Every person has their little bit of property. Their cozy house on that property. Their veranda. The shade of their vine. The shade of their fig tree. That is kind of an image of success that is presented. Not some corporate success which finds one ruling over an empire. Not extravagantly using means to pursue things that don’t bring joy in the last analysis, but a picture of the fact that the real joys of life in the last analysis are very simple. Sometimes we strive too hard to be happy.

A real peace, and also as Micah contemplates this he says in 4:5, “All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the LORD our God” (NIV). While we’re waiting for this blessed event to happen, let’s walk with the Lord. Let’s also remember he is saying in that day in Jerusalem and in Judah the remnant will be regathered. They will be lame but he will heal the lame and he will make them reign in Zion. It’s a beautiful spiritual fulfillment of this of course when Jesus comes and begins his fundamental ministry of healing the paralyzed, the lame.

III. In chapter 4:9 through 5:6, still dealing with the theme of Jerusalem’s doom and destiny, Micah gives a set of three prophecies, each of which emphasizes the distress within the city and the deliverance for the city.

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In each of these three sets, 4:9–10 is the first set, 4:11–13 the second set, 5:1–6 is the third prophecy about Jerusalem. In each one he speaks of a different kind of distress and a different sort of affliction. It is in the last of these three sets that he speaks of Bethlehem and from that we have the prophecy of Bethlehem, which we encounter in the Gospel of Matthew. In many Bible versions, each of the sets of prophecies about Jerusalem begin with the word “Now,” verses 4:9,11; 5:1.

A. In the first prophecy of distress and deliverance for Jerusalem he harkens back to the idea of being made a captive in Babylon and then coming back. Here is a striking thing. We would almost go past this if we were made to stop for a moment and reckon historically with where we’re at. Micah’s living in a time of which the invading power is Assyria. He is living in the latter part of the eighth century before Christ. It will be one hundred thirty years after Micah that his nation will finally fall. But it will not fall to the power of Assyria. It will fall to the power of Babylon, which on the world’s stage is not even yet a power when Micah writes. Yet he accurately prophesies that his country, Judah, will not fall to the Assyrians but rather it will fall into captivity to Babylon. When its place in Babylon is done it will be rescued, for the Lord will redeem it.

B. In his second poem about the distress and deliverance of Jerusalem he indicates that those nations which gather against Jerusalem and gaze upon it with the idea of profaning the city and using their weapons of war as a threshing device to grind the people of God into the dust, that they who have this intention for others will themselves be brought to that same kind of fate.

C. In 5:1–6, the prophecy which for us is the center of the Book of Micah, he contrasts the present king of Jerusalem when he is writing with the glorious future king which shall come to Jerusalem. He says in 5:1, “A siege is laid against us” (NIV). Perhaps here he is writing in the

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moment when Hezekiah has been laid siege to by King Sennacherib of Assyria. We know about this invasion both from the Bible and from secular accounts of Assyrian writings, which come down from the period. Sennacherib describes how he shut up king Hezekiah like a bird in a cage, how he took town after town—forty-six different towns—within Judah and how he took many captives. But in a moment of time the siege was broken. He heard a rumor of war; an angel of the Lord also intervened into the camp of the Assyrians and Jerusalem itself did not fall. But in this siege the king of Judah, Hezekiah, looks very weak. Micah prophetically says in a poetic kind of way “They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod” (NIV).

When you strike someone with a rod on the cheek it’s a real sign of affront. Someone does not come up to a king if he fears for his life and slap him. The fact that he can be hit suggests that he’s in a position of tremendous weakness. The fate of the king and the people are inevitably bound together. When the people are weak the king is also weak. When the king is weak the people are weak. Israel’s destiny was wrapped up with its king. Likewise when its king is strong its people are strong. So with the present fate of having their king affronted by Assyrian power Micah leaps onto the cradle of Davidic dynasty, the cradle of the king—Bethlehem, and says in a future moment, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times” (Micah 3:2, NIV).

The prophet is saying more than even he realizes. He’s saying something about the eternity of one that will come from David’s seed. He’s certainly harkening back to the truth, according to 1 Samuel 17:12, that the line of David began in Bethlehem. David’s father, Jesse, lived in Bethlehem. David was born in Bethlehem. In that little, insignificant, out-of-the-way place from which no one would ever guess anything significant would come, out to the cradle of Bethlehem

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would come first of all King David. Later in that very same town a future David, a greater than David, David's son who would also be David's Lord, would also come and He would take the kingdom.

It is a tremendously thrilling prophecy, which was so accurate that even those who were the scholars and advisors to Herod knew where to look for the birthplace of the Jewish king. It is said of him, "Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth [Mary being in travail brought forth Jesus] and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites" (Micah 5:3, NIV). We're some of that brethren. We're in that prophecy because the New Testament says that once we come to Jesus Christ we are now an heir with the Jews to the promises made to Abraham. When he came he caused us to return and "he will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth" (verse 4, NIV).

That is a prophecy which already is coming to pass spiritually, but yet will even have a physical dimension to its fulfillment in the time the Lord literally reigns on the earth.

Verses 5–6 are somewhat difficult to interpret. Micah does a play on words. He speaks of this one who is going to be born in Bethlehem, as to what his role is going to be in regard to the Assyrian threat. The RSV begins verse 5 by saying "And this shall be the peace..." A better alternative is "This is the one who will bring peace," then think of the phrase which begins with "when" all the way through the word "sword" in verse 6 as being separated by a great parentheses. The sentence would read something like this, "This is the one who will bring the peace and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border." The phrase in parenthesis, "When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads upon

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our soil we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men and they shall rule the land of Assyria with a sword,” is evidently Micah’s way of quoting a current battle song that was circulating in Judah saying here’s our idea of deliverance. We will raise up plenty of leaders, we will pull back Assyria and we’ll rule over them. It is a song which commentators feel that the Judean patriots were singing. Against that song and by way of contrast Micah says the one who will come will be the peace and he will bring the peace and he will deliver us from the Assyrians. There is a striking thing that happens here as you look at the Book of Kings, which describes this invasion. That is, that the angel of the Lord comes against the Assyrians and routs the Assyrian army with great loss to the Assyrians.

In the Old Testament whenever the phrase “the angel of the Lord” is used many think it could be an appearance of Jesus Christ before He came in the flesh. For the angel of the Lord is worshipped, and no angel can be worshipped. The angel of the Lord speaks on behalf of God and a number of things associated with the angel of the Lord. So we may well see here in Micah’s expectation the fact that the Lord makes his appearance as the angel of Yahweh. The angel of the Lord to bring deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

What a tremendous contrast between the current king, Hezekiah, and their future king, the Lord who will be their shepherd, their king, their deliverer.

IV. In verses 7–9 of chapter 5 Micah then, in regard to the destiny of Jerusalem, speaks of the role of the remnant which will come back from the many lands where they have been exiled and they will be a blessing for the peoples of the world.

He also indicates in verses 10–15 that God in His day of arrival, when the day begins for His reign to be assumed, will bring judgment upon Israel and upon the nations. He will take away

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those things which are wrong, and He will put in their place those things which are right. He will take away the images which are false and bring the true conception of himself.

I was looking at this particular phrase of God's describing himself in 5:13 as cutting off your images. We know that the Children of Israel in the Old Testament had a real problem with false representations of God and they made things out of wood, out of metal, and out of stone to represent God in precise disobedience to the commandment of not making any graven images. But you and I, I think, know that it is just as possible to make *mental* images of God which are wrong as it is possible to make *metal* images of God which are wrong. A wrong mental image of God distorts our concept of God, destroys our true concept of ourselves, and ruins us. A concept, for example, that God is overbearing and not loving and will not forgive us, this kind of concept will destroy any confidence we have that God is for us.

On the other hand, a mental concept of God that everything is sugar sweet and ok and one does whatever he wants and there's never any reckoning or accounting for what one has done will also work severe damage to our spiritual life. As we look at the Scriptures we are able to lay aside false mental and metal images of the Lord.

V. Briefly, in chapters 6 and 7, Micah comes to the third part of his written message.

He speaks of grace being triumphant over sin. In 6:1–7:7 he gives messages of reproof and lament. God takes up a court case against Israel for its sin. He introduces the court case by pleading to the mountains and the hills to give witness of what was happening in regard to the controversy the Lord had against his people. Here again we should not simply let words go by us without meditating upon their meaning. Micah is saying the mountains which loom over the valleys and which are witnesses, silent witnesses, of nature to all the events that have gone on down below, they have seen everything. So when he begins his court case against Israel in this

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particular section he is calling the mountains to bear witness against the people of God. He is saying to the mountains, “Hear the controversy, which the Lord has against his people. The controversy is this: ‘What have I done to you? In what way have I worried you? Answer me!’” God’s controversy is the fact that his people have left Him and left Him for no good reason. He did nothing to merit this kind of betrayal, this kind of removal from His presence. If we understand anything about God from the prophets, it’s God is sharply wounded and grieved when He is betrayed. When He has made friends with us and we have been His own and when we leave Him it hurts him more than you can describe.

Have you ever had someone close to you who has turned from you or betrayed you? You have a feeling in your heart which alternates between the Christian recognition to forgive and to love them nevertheless, but on the other hand the retaliation kind of a feeling to get even with them. Because one has been hurt so badly one hardly knows what to do.

That’s how God feels toward us when we leave him. When we betray him. When we go astray. God has a case against his people. He reminds them of the things which he has done for them. Verse 4–5 of chapter 6 are particularly dramatic. “I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered [This was the attempt to prophesy against Israel which was thwarted]. Remember your journey from Shittim unto Gilgal [Here are two references which are very important. Shittim was the last place which Israel encamped at before they crossed the Jordan. And Gilgal was the first place they crossed after the Jordan. When they came to the Jordan, Joshua, now the new leader of the people, smote the waters of the Jordan and they rolled up on either side and it was again like the

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Exodus, a great act of God. The waters of the Jordan were smitten] that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD” (NIV).

“Don’t you remember this?” Micah is pleading with his people. As I thought about this accusation that Micah makes, I thought of my own life. How easily I forget at times what God has done for me. I get in a new jam, a new situation that I’ve never felt like in any time of my life. It’s so easy in that kind of a situation to lose a sense of destiny. Lose a sense of what God has done for you at some previous time. To count it off as ancient history or even fantasy. But God wants His people to remember what He has done for them. He wants you to remember what he has done for you.

When we begin describing what Jesus has done for us we of course begin at the cross and with the empty tomb. But we go on from that to instances in our own life where God has met us. Judah, when it comes to grips with the emotion that God feels for the betrayal which He has suffered, begins to say, “What can we do about it now?” In 6:6–7 they come up with traditional means of trying to make peace with God. If we give God a gift, maybe we can get it off our conscience. Let’s put something in the offering and maybe God will feel better. When all along what he does not want is our things. What he simply wants is us.

In verse 6 He says, “Don’t bring me the quality of offerings. It’s not the quality of offerings that I want.” To bring a whole burnt offering meant the whole offering was going to be burnt up.

Some of the other offerings you got some of it back to eat yourself and to go home to your family with. The whole burnt offering was all God’s and that was an expensive offering.

Even a calf a year old...it doesn’t cost as much to give God a calf that’s only a few days old; he hasn’t eaten much of our oats yet. But when you have to feed it for a whole year then you’ve got a year’s investment in the animal, will you take him? God says no, that’s not what I want. If you

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don't want quality, maybe you want quantity. How about thousand rams? In the offering there was usually a measure of oil that was placed in the offering. How about ten thousands of rivers of oil? And I'll give you my firstborn, my own son, the fruit of my body for my sin. I'll give you the best and I'll give you the most.

Don't we try to do that sometimes with God when we come to our senses and realize we've been unfaithful? How much can I do for you, God? The Lord simply says, "First of all I just want you. I want you to begin walking rightly. I don't want all the trappings. I want your real self." Micah responds by saying, "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (verse 8, NIV). That phrase "to love mercy [or "kindness"]" is important. In the Hebrew it stands for the loving-kindness of God. It is a word that is much stronger than the word "love." It really carries the concept of love-loyalty. It is so deep that it will always be true. The Lord is saying of His people, "What I ask of you is a loyalty love, which is always there. Justice and humility."

Micah then returns to the theme of the sin of the people. He talked about commercial sins, the trickery of persons who are defrauding others of what is theirs using wrong weights, scant measures, living in houses which are built off of tyranny, speaking lies. Because of this he indicates God is going to move and deal out penalties. In fact, the penalty is going to be so severe that they will not enjoy what they have all their saved to get. How descriptive that still is of so much of modern life. The things we thought we would enjoy in our old age are all gone. Devastation. That's what Micah is saying.

In verse 16 he indicates that the apostasy of Judah is such that they have walked in the way of Omri who was the king of the Northern Kingdom and the way of Ahab who truly did not walk with God: "I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing" (KJV). That

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phrase describes a kind of fate when one wanted to express horror at something that was too great for the senses to take in. One expelled a kind of hissing expulsion of breath. The devastation which will come because of this kind of living will cause others to look in horror. Chapter 7:1–7 is still on this theme of denouncing Judah. Micah kind of summarizes and laments over his decadent society. He has come looking for fruit and instead has found none. Everything has been harvested. There is nothing to satisfy his soul. He's like Jesus who has come expecting to find fruit on the vine and instead found nothing. There was no righteousness.

The situation is so severe as Micah contemplates the treachery and betrayal in the town that not only is the betrayal against God but also against someone else. So Micah has to give the counsel in 7:5, "Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words" (NIV). In other words don't even tell your wife your plans because your wife will betray you. "A son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies are the members of his own household" (verse 6, NIV). A time of betrayal. A time of great hurting.

What will Micah say of this betrayal? What will his attitude be? When you can trust no one else, he responds in verse 7, "But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait God my Savior; my God will hear me" (NIV). He will hope for the Lord. His pessimism in regard to others being true to him will not drive him into despair but it will instead drive him into the arms of God.

How much the Scriptures were a comfort to Christ! Christ went through this very experience when He was betrayed by all and when His enemies were those of his own house. To what in those moments did He turn for comfort and solace? We know there was not the frequency of the audible voice of God coming from heaven assuring Him. It only happened a couple of times in all of His ministry. He took his comfort from the Scripture. In those moments when He was

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betrayed and alone to whom did He look? “I will watch and I will wait for the Lord.” Good words for all of us.

VI. Finally the book concludes in 7:8–20 with confident hopes and prayers.

It is to better times that Micah looks in the last of his book. In verses 8–10 he gives a psalm of confidence which is meant to be spoken by Zion. One of the hymns that the redeemed might be singing on that occasion, chanted or sung in unison, is “Do not gloat over me, my enemy!

Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light” (NIV). The hymn goes on to exult in the fact that God will bring low all of those who have sinned against Him.

In verses 11–13 Micah speaks on behalf of God to the people who have just sung to Him. He says “The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries” (NIV). Here Micah says the ideal promise which God gave to Abraham that his land would be from the Euphrates to the Nile, that it would cover all the expanse of territory which is now Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan and Syria and Iraq and part of Iran and Egypt, all of that great multitude of land will now be His people, the redeemed, which I believe will be both Jews and Gentiles in God’s new humanity. All of that will be given to them.

In verses 14–17 he gives a prayer of supplication. An exciting prayer. “Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, which lives by itself in a forest, in fertile pasturelands. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead [regions to the east of Jordan] as in days long ago. ‘As in when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them my wonders.’ Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of their power” (NIV).

THE PROPHET OF BETHLEHEM, PART 2

Micah 3-7

All the time those without God have been saying we would believe if we could see. And they've refused to believe because they never saw in the way they wanted to see in a physical way. Now that which has been demanded is finally given but too late. They shall see.

Micah is similar in kind and spirit to the prayer of saint Paul when he acknowledges the time when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Finally in 18–20 a prayer of confidence, a hymn of praise where Micah closes on the theme which points out the beauty of the nature of God. “Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago” (NIV).

Can you believe that God can utterly pass over your transgression? Utterly and completely, no longer remember your failings. God will look that way at us, the things we have done to deeply disappoint Him, to disappoint others. Maybe some things we have done which no one else is even aware of. God is willing to bury it and remember it no more. Micah gives us an exalted understanding of God. An understanding which the apostle Paul will call to mind and dwell upon in his letters of Romans and Galatians where he will speak of the wonder that God has done for us in the vastness of his forgiveness.