

Micah 1-4 A Prophet to Israel and Judah

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We're going to be starting a new book study tonight in Micah, and I think you're going to enjoy it. We're going to do this over a two-Wednesday time period, so let's open up in prayer and we'll get into it here tonight, okay?

Father in heaven, we thank you for the opportunity tonight to gather in the name of Jesus Christ. And Lord, that is our heart to bring glory and honor and praise to that name. And we take time here tonight to praise you. We praise you, Lord, for your faithfulness. We praise you, Father, for your goodness. We thank you for your mercy. We thank you, Lord for the free gifts of grace that you give us every single day. Every breath that we take is a gift of grace. We thank you, Lord, for the opportunities that are ours each day to share our faith and just to live our faith out loud. And we come before you tonight just to lift up your name, to worship your holy name, to praise you, to rejoice in you, Lord, in your incredible sacrifice for us.

And we pray that you would use our time tonight in the word to really encourage and challenge us in our faith. As we study through the Old Testament, we get such a wonderful insight through the historical and informational content that the Old Testament has. And we learn so much about the consistency of your word and your redemptive program, Lord, as you revealed yourself to the people of Israel. And we pray that you'd help us to lay hold of the things that we see tonight in the word. And we thank you for this time. In Jesus' precious name we pray: Amen. Amen.

So, Micah, find it in your Bible. It's one of the minor prophets. And by the way, I got to tell you what happened to me on Monday, my day off, before I get started in the teaching.

I was talking on Sunday morning how Sue and I got some new glasses, and I got her in and she got her eyes checked and she got new glasses and that was great. And I got some new frames too. These aren't them. Monday is our day off, so we get up Monday and we have this little favorite restaurant.

I don't know if you guys have ever been to Orchard House. It's a little kind of ma-and-pa restaurant just outside of Marsing, right there in the middle of the vineyards in its beautiful area. And we like to motorcycle there sometimes. On Monday morning we decided we were going to leave bright and early.

Actually, it wasn't even all that bright because it was really early. We wanted to get in the cool summer air. And so we made our way to the restaurant and I'm pulling my helmet off to go into the restaurant and I snagged my new glasses and down they went on the pavement. And I made a big chip out of one of the lenses right there.

So, I had them for three days. We made our way home after breakfast. I'd gotten my frames and lenses at Costco, and Costco's pretty good with people. So Sue said, "you better not waste too much time," so I got in the car, went to Costco and I kind of sheepishly handed my glasses to the lady.

She's like, "three days, right?"

"Yeah. Three days."

She says, "well, lucky for you we have a little you're-an-idiot clause, and we will...", she said, "this is a one-time thing. But we'll remake your lenses for you."

And I was thankful. Picked up a couple of things at Costco, put on my old glasses and picked up a couple things. Made my way out to the car. Loaded up the car. And while I was out there, I put on my prescription sunglasses. Put these glasses in a case and got all the way home and I couldn't find my glasses.

And suddenly I realized what I had done. And I was groaning and moaning so loudly in the garage, Sue came running. I think she thought I was having a stroke or something. And I said, "you're not going to believe what I did. I left my glasses in the shopping cart at Costco in Nampa (Idaho)." So we hopped in the car, drove back to Nampa, was our second trip in the day.

And thankfully the people at the customer service desk, somebody had seen them, turned them in and I got them back. Otherwise, I'd be sitting here with my prescription sunglasses probably right now, which would be a cool look, but, not really. And it would take a lot of explaining. So long story just to tell you how much of an idiot I can be.

We're in Micah, so let's get into it here tonight. As we normally do starting a book, I'm going to give you just a bit of an introduction so you can go into this book understanding a little bit about this. The prophet Micah lived during the time of other prophets. He's actually going to mention that. He lived during the time of Isaiah. He lived during the time of Hosea. And he had a prophetic ministry during the reigns, as we're going to see here in the first couple of verses, of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Now we know then what the dates are roughly of when Micah had his prophetic ministry going on. And it was just before the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian Empire. Remember, the Assyrians at this time are the world power. And so, Micah came into the land and began to speak to both northern Israel and southern Judah to talk to them about God's judgment. But he did it at a time where during his ministry, he saw the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel.

He saw that kingdom come to its knees. In fact, it was a little over 20 years later that the Assyrians came against Judah, invaded Judah as well, and almost took Jerusalem. And yet the Lord had other plans. The Lord turned them back at the last minute. If you want to, you can read all about that very near disaster. It's in 2 Kings chapters 18 and 19.

Micah, like other prophets who were called by the Lord, called out the people of Israel because of their rejection of the Lord and their very quick adoption of the pagan practices of the nations around them. In addition to that, Micah confronts them with the fact that the wealthy we're oppressing the poor people of the land.

And you're going to see that in the chapters that we cover here tonight. Now, one of the things we won't cover here tonight, unfortunately we'll do it next week, is that Micah is also the prophet who tells us that God is going to raise up a royal deliverer who will be born in Bethlehem. And it is through Micah's prophecy that was made known.

And we'll talk about that next week. But we're going to find here in the book of Micah that the prophet makes many statements that can be very challenging to understand, particularly for a modern English-speaking audience. And I'll explain why here as we get into chapter 1. And I think you'll get it as we go through here.

So, chapter 1, verse 1, begins like this: *"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."*

Now remember, Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. It's a divided kingdom. They're all Israelites in the real sense of the word. They're all Jews. But they had a civil war. They had a civil parting, if you will, that divided the nation into a northern and southern kingdom. And Micah is prophesying to both kingdoms at this time.

Verse 2, *"²Hear, 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."* Notice that Micah addresses not just the peoples of the northern and southern kingdoms of the Jews, but also he says, oh, earth, listen up because he's going to talk about things that are going to affect the whole earth.

Verse 3, *"³For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth."* And that is certainly going to affect everyone on the face of the earth.

"⁴And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. ⁵All 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?" Remember, high places were pagan mounds and hills where they would accomplish their pagan practices. Pagans believed that the higher you got up geographically, the closer you were to your god, small "g." And so they would do their sacrifices and prayers and offerings and all the other horrific things they did on a mountaintop. They would look for a hilltop. They'd look for anything that was a rise. And they called them high places. And so the term high place began to be known as a pagan place of worship.

I want you to notice, he says, *"what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?"* Jerusalem is built on Mount Zion. So he's really saying that Jerusalem has become this pagan haunt, this place that draws pagans to a place of worship and that sort of thing.

Verse 6. So he says, *"⁶Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards,"* in other words, a place that used to have houses and cities, it'll be an open country. *"and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. ⁷All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces,"* (and that refers to the carved images of pagan worship) *"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."*

So when he refers to the fee of a prostitute, he's referring to the spiritual adultery of the northern kingdom of Israel. And God considered Israel His bride. And the fact that she had not been faithful to Him and had actually gone off after other lovers, meaning pagan deities. This gets considered a form of prostitution or harlotry. And so just as a prostitute does things for wages, sexual acts for wages, so the Lord likens the pagan practices of His people, Israel, to that of a prostitute. And he says that you gathered these things as a prostitute, and so they will be returned, in fact, to a prostitute.

He says in verse 8, *"⁸For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make lamentation like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches."* Now, this is an interesting verse in verse 8, because it tells us what the heart of the Lord is toward the destructive behavior in pagan practices of His people.

How does God feel? I mean, think about it this way. How does God feel today when someone turns away from His word? Turns away from worship of the one true God and runs after the things of the world, the pagan things of the world. How does God feel about that? Does He feel anything?

Have you ever thought about, does God feel anything? Well, yes. He feels very deeply. He is a person with obvious emotions and while we can't perfectly liken them to our own, we know that He feels. And God communicates here that because of the sin of Israel, he says, I will enter into lamentation, which is cries of grief and mourning.

He says in verse 9, and this is the reason why, *"⁹For her wound is incurable, and it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem."* So the sin of Israel, the northern kingdom, had now seeped into the southern kingdom as well.

And so he says in verse 10, *"¹⁰Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all;"* now, where is Gath? Gath is in the area of the Philistines. So what he's saying here is don't speak of this judgment to the Philistines unless they rejoice in the downfall of Israel. Don't even let it be heard among the enemies of Israel.

That's the point of what he's saying. Now, I need to stop you here, right here in the middle of verse 10 because from here onward, Micah is going to employ some interesting verbal language that would be impossible for us to figure out as English readers without knowing the meaning of various Hebrew cities and towns that he's going to mention here concerning the judgment that is coming to them. And what he's going to do is some word plays. He's actually going to use

some puns. They're not funny puns, but he's going to use puns nonetheless to do a word play on the names of these various cities to speak of the judgment that is coming.

And here's why. You have to understand something, and I think you guys know this. It all goes back to this ancient idea of the fact that names were given to people and places, not randomly, not because it was a popular name, but because often those names spoke of the character of the person or the place, and sometimes they even spoke of their future.

They even had a prophetic element to them. For example, Bethlehem means house of bread. And so all of the names of cities they have meanings behind them. Well, Micah is going to play on those in a strange sort of a way to speak of judgment. And I'll show you how it goes as we get into it.

For example, we're at the very end of verse 10, he says, "*in Beth-le-aphrah*" which yeah, this is a lot easier to pronounce in the NIV, it's just Beth Ophrah. He says, "*roll yourselves in the dust.*" Now here's what's interesting. This city name means city of dust. And so to that city, God says to roll in the dust.

And that was a word picture of someone writhing in pain because of their defeat. Or their agony. So you can see how he's taking the name of a town and using it with a word play, almost like a pun to speak of the judgment that is coming. He goes on verse 11, "*Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame;*" now, in this one the name Shaphir the city name means beautiful and pleasant. But you'll notice that after they're going to be attacked, and God's telling them here, they're going to be attacked by the Assyrians. They're not going to be beautiful and pleasant. They're going to be the opposite of that. They're going to be naked and ashamed.

So you can see he's using a word play on their name to give the opposite. And then he says here, and also verse 11, "*the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come out;*" and that is a play on words related to the words come out. Because in this case, that's essentially what the name means. But he's saying that they're going to be too afraid to come out of their city because of the attacks of the Assyrians when they come.

He goes on here in verse 11 to say, "*the lamentation*" (or the cry) "*of Beth-ezel shall take away from you its standing place.*" Or its purpose, if you will. Now, Beth-ezel means house of nearness.

And what that meant in a Jewish Hebrew way of thinking was you could run to it for protection because it was near, okay, that was the idea. You can run to Beth-ezel because it's a place that will give you protection because it's nearby. And yet what does God say? God is going to take away from them. And it's standing or its ability to be a place of protection. Because God is going to cause it to fall as well.

Verse 12 we're almost done here ¹²*For the inhabitants of Maroth*" and the word Maroth in the Hebrew sounds very similar to the Hebrew word bitterness. He says to that people *"wait anxiously for good, because disaster has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem."* And disaster and bitterness have a connection in that verse.

Verse 13. This is a challenge. He says, ¹³*Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish;*" and this is a challenge. He's almost telling them, go ahead, get your horses ready. Try to fight. You're not going to be able to. You're not going to be able to stand.

So he's challenging them. Go ahead harness your steeds to the chariots. But he goes on to say, *"it was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel. ¹⁴Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth-gath;"* parting gifts is the Hebrew word for wedding presents. It literally meant those gifts that a father would give his daughter when she married a man as parting gifts, as she left to go be with her husband.

So he's saying, ¹⁴*Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth-gath;"* that's a play on words with the idea that they're going to be sent away. You're giving them parting gifts. Why would you give someone a parting gift? Because they're leaving. So he's saying the people of Moresheth-gath will be leaving.

And he says, *"the houses of Achzib"* (which interestingly enough means deception) *"shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel."* And what that means is the city of Achzib will be unable to help the kings of Israel. They will have no ability to help them. And so the idea there is they will be a deceitful thing.

Verse 15, the Lord says, ¹⁵*I will again bring a conqueror to you, inhabitants of Mareshah;"* (and of course, the conqueror being referred to here is the king of Assyria) *"the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam. ¹⁶Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair, for the children of your delight; make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they"* (meaning the children) *"shall go from you into exile."*

The making of one's self bald was another thing that people would do along with throwing dust on their head, wearing sackcloth, crying out in lamentation to show grief and mourning and suffering. And so he says to those people cut off your hair a sign of grief because your children will be taken away from you.

Chapter 2, isn't this good news so far? You glad you came tonight? Chapter 2, this is where the Lord outlines the charges against the people of Israel. We'll go through these fairly rapidly. He says, *"¹Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds!"* In other words, they're constantly planning something evil. *"When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand."* In other words, they do it because they can, right? The power is in their hands, so they do it.

*²They covet fields and seize them,
and houses, and take them away;
they oppress a man and his house,
a man and his inheritance.*

*³Therefore 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.*

*⁴In 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."*

*⁵Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot
in the assembly of the LORD.*

*⁶"Do not preach"—thus they preach—
"one should not preach of such things;
disgrace will not overtake us." (ESV)*

And this is now Micah talking about people telling him, don't say that. Don't say the things that you're saying. Don't say that that these things are going to overtake us or disgrace is coming. Don't tell us that.

*⁷Should 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?
⁸But 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.
⁹The women of my people you drive out
from their delightful houses;
from their young children you take away
my splendor forever.
¹⁰Arise and go,
for this is no place to rest,
because of uncleanness that destroys
with a grievous destruction.
¹¹If 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!" (ESV)*

And that's a pretty negative thing for the Lord to say. If somebody comes along and preaches to you of getting drunk, you'd consider him a good preacher. But I want you to see something about verse 10. Can I back you up just for a moment? The Lord says, "¹⁰Arise and go, for this is no place to rest," first of all, that's a description of a land that is saturated with evil. It's not restful, it's chaotic. It there's constant bickering and fighting and issues.

I personally think that we're seeing this played out even here in the United States of America. Other nations are too, that are divided against themselves. And Jesus said that a nation divided against itself cannot stand. But they become a place of unrest. Do you see unrest in our country today? I mean, when you turn on the news or read the headlines or whatever, do you see unrest?

Well, we all do, every single one of us. But God is telling us right here, He says, arise and go because this is no place of rest. But I want you to notice also what he says there in verse 10, "*because of uncleanness, that destroys*" because of uncleanness that destroys. That's a fascinating phrase. Uncleanness is something that God defines with His word, and uncleanness is really that which is contrary to the word of God, contrary to His will. Contrary to His ways, contrary to His creation. We can see, in the Old Testament, that word was used a lot 'unclean.'

In the New Testament, it was often used of a demonic spirit, an unclean spirit. So it's something that is just completely contrary to God and His will. So here's my first question. Do you see things in this country going on that are contrary to God's will? We all do. What is the result of that which is contrary to God's will?

Well, He says right here in verse 10, it destroys. And that's a very simple description. But it tells you and me in very clear terms. When people talk about their lifestyle and they say, who am I hurting? If I do what I do and I don't touch you or you don't see what I do, or you don't have to hear what I do but it's my choice. It's my lifestyle. I can do what I want in the privacy of my home. I can live the way I want. I can have the choices that I have and it doesn't hurt you. That's actually completely wrong because uncleanness in a land, destroys. And that touches everybody. That touches everybody.

You have to know in the land of Israel and in the land of Judah, not everybody was ungodly. There were godly people there. God's always has a remnant of people and there was a remnant then. Were they touched by the uncleanness and the destruction of what was going on in the land. Of course, they were. We talked about Daniel on Sunday.

Daniel was a man who, as a teenager, was carted off to the Babylonian empire where he lived the remainder of his life away from his homeland that he loved so dearly and prayed for constantly. Did Daniel want to leave Israel? No. Was he forced to leave? Yes. Why? Because of the destructive uncleanness of the land.

So you see, that argument that what I do doesn't affect you. It's not true. Somebody is thinking from a purely human standpoint, and they're not seeing things through a biblical lens or a biblical mindset, or a biblical worldview. We know that what we do affects other people, whether they see or hear us or even know about it or not.

Chapter 2 is interesting in that the last 2 verses speak with a word of restoration for the future. So we kind of have an uptick. Notice what it says in verse 12, *"¹²I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep and a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men."*

And so what is God saying here in verse 12? He's saying the northern kingdom of Israel is going to be conquered by the Assyrians. The southern kingdom of Judah is ultimately going to be conquered by the Babylonians. But I'm going to bring them back. I'm going to bring the people from Judah back to the land.

And in fact, there's going to be so many of them, they're going to be a noisy multitude. But I want you to notice something else here. Verse 13 is a very interesting sort of veiled reference to the coming of Messiah because he says here, *"¹³He 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." And I truly believe that the king, the one who opens the breach, is almost certainly speaking of the coming of Messiah. But he'll get more into that.

Chapter 3, we're going to also read fairly rapidly because I really want to get to chapter 4 because you're going to like it. But chapter 3 is where the Lord kind of denounces the leaders of Israel, both religious and political, for their responsibility of not correcting the waywardness of the people. In fact, even participating in the downfall as well, of the people. So let's go through these.

The Lord begins with those who should be protecting the people and providing justice. He says, *"¹And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?"* That's a great question. Now this is speaking to the judges. Those who have that role, of upholding justice.

And God cares very much for justice. He is a God of justice, and He wants us to follow His lead of justice. And he says, is it not for you to know and to keep justice? But look how he goes on to describe them. In verse 2, these judges, *"²you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, ³who 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."*

Now, understand here this is not referring to literal cannibalism. They didn't literally eat the people. He's using a word picture to give us a graphic description of how the poor people were literally stripped of everything by those who were wealthy and in power. Who took their homes, took their fields, their vineyards, took everything they had, just took it away from them because they could. Just because they could.

And that's what he's talking about. But he refers to it as literally skinning them alive. And then in verse 4, he says, *"⁴Then they" (and that's not referring to the poor, that's referring to the leaders who did these terrible things) "will cry out 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."*

Now, the Lord turns to address those who claim to speak for Him, and these are the false prophets. Verse 5, *"⁵Thus 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."* In other words, while there's abundance and prosperity, these prophets simply say it's all good. And the prosperity that you're having right now is proof of it. And right before

Israel was attacked by the Assyrian army, there was prosperity, there was wealth, and the Jews took that to mean that they had God's favor.

And the false prophets confirmed that deception by saying peace, God is with you. Would you be blessed like this if God wasn't with you and pleased with you? They did not chalk it up to God's grace and mercy. They chalked it up to the goodness of the people, which of course wasn't goodness at all.

Verse 6, *"⁶Therefore it shall be night to you,"* (he's talking to these prophets) *"without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; ⁷the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips,"* (in other words, put their hand over their mouth) *"for there is no answer from God."*

Now, Micah takes 1 verse as a contrast to speak of his own prophetic ministry in verse 8. Look what he says, it's kind of interesting. He says, *"⁸But 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."*

So just in case somebody might think that Micah was prophesying about himself when he talked in the earlier verses about the false prophets, he came back and said, but as for me, I am filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to declare to Jacob his sin. But I want you to notice that Micah said, I came *"to declare to Jacob"* and that's another name for Israel, I came to de declare to him his sin.

I want you to understand something about that. Micah wasn't given this prophetic ministry just to be critical. I've talked to people today who believe that they have a prophetic gift to go to church to church to church to criticize. Seriously. That's their ministry. 'I go to different churches to tell them what's wrong.' Didn't that sound like fun to have somebody like that pop in. As if we don't know, first of all. But second of all, to just be critical.

That wasn't Micah's intent. His intent was to get the people to repent. His intent was to get them to fear the Lord and to change their ways, not to be critical for the sake of being critical. But to show their sin so that people's eyes would be open and they would turn to the Lord and return to their first love.

Now verse 9. The Lord turns again to address the rulers of the people. And you'll notice this is interesting. He says, *"⁹Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice"* (that's not a good

thing for rulers) *"and make crooked all that is straight, ¹⁰who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity."* So notice here, *"they detest justice"* and they *"make crooked all that is straight."* First of all, who's to say what is straight? Well, God. It's God's word. Man doesn't say what is straight. Man takes what is straight and makes it crooked. And says this is the right way and we're going to walk in it.

I don't know if you keep up with the news at all, but I saw a news item that part of the House of Representatives apparently are moving quickly. They're fearful that the Supreme Court is going to do to gay marriage what they did to Roe v. Wade. And so they're moving quickly to codify gay marriage across the country because they're fearful. Because there's a democratic majority to move that through the house. And they're afraid of the conservative majority in the Supreme Court.

But what I see here in these verses is just what we're seeing in the United States. The rulers are taking that which is straight and making it crooked, and calling it right, and calling it good. Kind of makes you wonder how the leaders of our current nations, not just here in the US but elsewhere, will be held accountable for their leadership, for them telling the people, this is law. We make it good. We literally take what God said that marriage is between one man and one woman. And we're going to make it something else. We're going to define it ourselves. That's our right. And man is going to ultimately be accountable for that.

Verse 11 says, *"¹¹Its 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.""* So he says, here they are talking boldly about God's protective mercy, while at the same time they're living in such a way as to make themselves rich off the people.

Verse 12, *"¹²Therefore because of you"* and this is a powerful word God is speaking to the leaders *"because of you"* (he says) *"Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height."* I want to remind you, Micah didn't live long enough to see this prophecy come to pass. He didn't see Judah or Jerusalem fall. But it did, it fell.

All right, chapter 4. Now in chapter 4, the Lord is going to speak mostly of the future exaltation of the nation of Israel, which is going to be finally and completely fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. Let me give you very briefly a timeline of last days events.

We are in the last days right now. We have been in the last days ever since the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit fell upon the church in Acts chapter 2. That began the last days or the last age, if you will. So we're in the last days. Now, it's my personal opinion, we're in the last days of the last days, but I just told you, that's just my opinion and that's not worth anything. But I gave it anyway.

The next event on God's prophetic calendar is the catching away of the church. And that could happen at any time. Jesus comes for His church. He does not come to earth. We meet Him in the air, and that's what Paul says in Thessalonians. We will meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

We'll be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. So He's going to take His bride and to heaven with Him, and we're going to be changed at that time. The Bible says, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52), and that means we're going to receive our incorruptible bodies at that time. And we will be with the Lord while the earth begins a period called the great tribulation, which will last the entire time of seven years. Although the wrath of that is really just the second half of that.

So when the church is taken away, the great tribulation begins. Then at the end of the great tribulation, there's going to be a massive war where the nations of the world are going to come against Israel to destroy her, and it's going to look very much like they are succeeding.

Then the Lord will return to the earth, and we will come with Him. And the Lord will fight on behalf of Israel against her enemies in a battle that is referred to as Armageddon. And that is when Armageddon takes place at the very end of the great tribulation. After that battle, we enter into a 1000-year period of peace on the earth called the millennial kingdom, or some call it the Messianic kingdom.

This is where Jesus rules and reigns on the earth. Micah talks about the millennial kingdom a lot in this chapter, and you'll see some of the things that he says related to it. And really the whole thing is very good except two verses. There are two verses in this chapter where Micah stops looking ahead to the millennial kingdom and he begins to speak of the Babylonian invasion of Judah.

And then he goes back to speak of the millennial kingdom again. So they jump back and forth. You have to be careful reading the Old Testament. It is not linear in the sense that it's always consistent and talking about the same thing there. In fact, I'm going to show you a prophecy tonight that deals with the first coming and the second coming of Jesus in the same passage.

All right let's get into it. Chapter 4, verse 1. *"¹It 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 that's a word picture saying that Jerusalem is going to be the most exalted city in the world.

So he's saying a day is coming. When is that day coming? He tells you: in the latter days. Now, that's not super specific, but we know that it obviously hasn't happened yet. And we know that Jesus is going to be enthroned during the millennial kingdom. And so this is when we believe this is going to take place.

And I want you to see, I didn't read the entire verse. I want you to see the last few words of verse 1, *"and peoples shall flow to it,"* now, this is one of many Old Testament prophetic passages that predict a mass movement of people from around the world going to Jerusalem. And this is what's going to take place during the millennial kingdom when Jesus establishes His throne there in Jerusalem.

People all over are going to come to Jerusalem. And look at what in verse 2, this is what's going to be going on. *"²and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD," (that's Mount Zion) "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."*

So the nations of the world are going to stream to Israel and to Jerusalem to listen to Jesus teach. And He's going to teach them. And that's what they're coming for. And they're going to recognize an incredible blessing that is on Israel as frankly a favored nation. And that is still the case.

Verse 3, check this out. This is very important. This gives us one of the characteristics of the millennial kingdom. *"³He shall judge between many peoples,"* (in other words, Jesus is going to settle disputes) *"and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;"* now, this is where we learn of one of the primary characteristics of the millennial kingdom. There's going to be peace because Jesus is going to finally bring peace where man has been unable to accomplish it. We've had all these peace proposals and Middle East peace things and this and that, and none of them lasts very long at all.

Jesus is going to come and there's going to be a lasting peace. So much so that they're going to take their implements of war and they're going to turn them into implements of agriculture. Now you'll notice that they use here ancient descriptions of implements of agriculture. And frankly, warfare. It says they'll "*beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;*" well, we don't really use swords and spears in modern warfare, but remember Micah is getting a picture here. And he's describing what he knows, which is nations laying down their armaments and actually taking whatever money and resources they would've put into making implements of warfare and using them to make food, to feed the people of their nations.

And notice it says, "*neither shall they learn war anymore;*" and that means during the whole course of that 1000 year period of time the nations are not going to learn war during that time. Now, this is something that the Bible echoes in several other passages. Let me show you on the screen, one from Hosea:

(slide)

Hosea 2:18 (ESV)

And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.

The millennial period is going to be a time of unprecedented safety.

Notice now also Zachariah:

(slide)

Zechariah 9:9-10 (ESV)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

What is this referring to? This is referring to that time when Jesus came into the city, in His first coming. And this is referring to that what we celebrate on Palm

Sunday. But I want you to notice it goes on to talk about His second coming in the same passage.

So isn't that interesting? Zechariah chapter 9, verses 9 and 10. You have His first coming and His second coming all in one passage. It speaks of Him coming, riding on a colt, on the foal of a donkey. It's His first coming. And then it speaks of His second coming to rule the earth during the millennial kingdom and how He will cut off war from the land.

This is interesting, look at Micah chapter 4 verses 1 through 3 again. Just take a look at those verses. I won't even read them again, but just look at them quickly in your Bible. Micah 4 versus 1 through 3. You familiarize yourself with what they say?

Now look at this from Isaiah:

(slide)

Isaiah 2:2-4 (ESV)

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 shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples 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. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; 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.

You think, wow, is that a little too much of a coincidence to read these passages that intersect with one another and actually almost verbatim read the same as another passage? Well, no, it's not a coincidence when you stop and think about the fact that it's the same Holy Spirit that inspired all the prophets to write what they did.

Can He not inspire 2 or 3 prophets to write the same thing, to give them essentially the same message? Well, of course He can, and He did. And it's because the Lord wanted it established and known that these things would in fact, come to pass.

Verse 4, another characteristic of this millennial kingdom, *"⁴but 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."* And so he's talking about this time of peace on the land where a farmer goes out to work his land and he gets to benefit from the labors.

Do you know what would often happen when Israel was under judgment? They would go out and work the fields and harvest, and then an enemy would come in and take what they harvested. The Philistines would do it regularly. There were other raiders from other nations that did it as well. But during the millennial kingdom, the characteristic God wanted them to know is that they would be safe with no one to make them afraid.

Verse 5, *"⁵For 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. ⁶In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; ⁷and 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."* Now, there it is right there. That's the millennial kingdom. The Lord Himself will reign from Mount Zion.

Verse 8, *"⁸And 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."* In other words, that former dominion that God had given on a temporary scale to Jerusalem will return to them at that time.

Verses 9 and 10 are interesting because they return to the present day. And this is now a word to Judah of the coming Babylonian invasion, which Micah didn't live long enough to see happen. But it also contains a promise of restoration. As you'll see, look at verses 9 and 10:

*"⁹Now why do you cry aloud?
Is there no king in you?
Has your counselor perished,
that pain seized you like a woman in labor?
¹⁰Writhe 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." (ESV)*

So in just those 2 verses, God first confronts them and says, why are you arriving in pain? Don't you have any leaders that can take care of you? They didn't. Secondly, He says, essentially, you're going to be taken away from your city and taken off to Babylon. And then thirdly, He says, but I'm going to rescue you. I will rescue you and bring you back. And He did.

And now the chapter closes out with a word about another great battle that is coming. It's one I've already talked to you about, and that's the one we call Armageddon. Which is the battle which takes place at the end of the great tribulation. When Jesus and His bride return to the earth to fight alongside Israel, verse 11 and 12:

*"¹¹Now many nations
are assembled against you,
saying, "Let her be defiled,
and let our eyes gaze upon Zion."*

*¹²But 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." (ESV)*

Now, this is how we know that he's talking here about Armageddon because Armageddon is often referred to in the Bible as a time of harvest. And God would use these terms a lot in the Old Testament because everybody was familiar with agriculture. Everybody. And so when you're likening things or building word pictures, the easiest thing to do is talk about plowing and harvest and seed time and rain, and things that everybody understood. And you could make a correlation to spiritual truths.

Well, here he's talking about this great battle against the nations who have come against Israel. And he says they gather against her, but they don't know the plan of the Lord. They don't know that God's coming back. They don't know that Jesus is going to return and fight for Israel. And they will be gathered as sheaves on a threshing floor.

Well, there are several references in the Bible of the battle of Armageddon that uses agricultural terms to help us understand what is going to happen. And 1 of them is the harvesting of wine. And I'm going to show you this 1 on the screen first from Revelation chapter 14. Look at this:

(slide)

Revelation 14:17-19 (ESV)

Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

This is how we know this is not a good harvest. This isn't an evangelistic harvest. This is a harvest of wrath. And this is referring, here in Revelation 14, once again to the battle of Armageddon.

But it is also referenced later on in the book of Revelation in chapter 19. Let me show you this on the screen:

(slide)

Revelation 19:15-16 (ESV)

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

So again, this is talking about Jesus and the reference to Armageddon using agricultural terms of a winepress. The grapes being thrown into the winepress where they would be squeezed so they would get the juice, which would eventually become wine. But this is again a picture of the wrath of God being poured out upon the nations of the earth.

Back to Micah, we have just 1 final verse to end this chapter and it says, ¹³*"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion,"* (again an agricultural term, to thresh the grain) *"for I will make your horn"* (remember, horn is always a symbol of strength in the Bible) *"I will make your horn iron,"* (in other words, I will make your strength like iron) *"and I will make your hoofs"* (or your feet) *"bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; and shall devote their gain"* (or their wealth, if you will) *"to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth."*

So this last verse is just simply reminding the people of Israel that they will also be involved in the battle of Armageddon. When Jesus returns and we return

with Him as His bride, we will fight alongside Israel at that time against the enemies who have come against her. And Israel will have an opportunity to fight on her own behalf.

And so he says to the people of Zion, "*Arise and thresh,*" go for it because the Lord is with you. Now remember something about the people of Israel when the Lord returns. We also learn in the Old Testament that the people of Israel, when they see their Messiah, they there will be a national turning. The people of Israel will all turn to the Lord as one person.

They will mourn over Him because they will look upon Him as an only Son that was lost. And they will realize He was the one they crucified. And they will mourn because they lost all that time and all that connection with Him. But they will turn to Him. And as Paul says in Romans, at that time, all Israel will be saved at that time (Romans 11:26).

So that's where we're going to end here in chapter 4. And we'll do the last 3 chapters, yeah, 5, 6, and 7 next Wednesday, Lord willing.

So let's pray. Father, we thank you for giving us this time tonight to dig into the Old Testament scriptures, the book of Micah. We thank you for the book of Micah. We thank you for the reminders that it gives us that you are a holy God and that there is wrath for those who reject you. But Lord, we are also reminded of what the New Testament tells us, and that is that those who put their faith in Jesus and what He did on the cross, their sins are forgiven. Their sins have been blotted out.

Lord, our sins have been blotted out, and now there is no wrath for those who are in Christ Jesus because our Savior took the wrath of God on our behalf. And Lord, I just pray tonight for any here who need to rededicate their hearts to the Lord, who need to say, Jesus, I believe that you died for me on the cross, and I accept your sacrifice as a personal sacrifice for me. And I believe, Lord, that because you suffered on the cross, you suffered for me. You suffered in the place of my sin. You paid the penalty of my sin. And I believe, Lord, that I'm a child of God and I ask you, Lord, to strengthen me, to serve you and live for you all the days of my life.

I thank you my Father, God, for the work that you're doing in the hearts of people, the personal revivals that I hear about every day. Thank you, Lord. I praise you and thank you for this time tonight. In Jesus' precious name, amen.