

GOD'S PROPHETS WARNED

CORE PASSAGE: MICAH 5:1-5; 6:6-8; 7:8-9,18-20

CONTEXT

During the reigns of Judah's kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, God sent the prophet Micah with a message for both Israel and Judah. Micah spoke the word of the Lord and foretold the judgment, destruction, and exile that was coming for both Israel and Judah. Both kingdoms had failed to keep the Lord's covenant and would continue to do so, with a few exceptions from Judah's kings, such as Hezekiah and Josiah. But Micah also had a message for the future, a message of hope and restoration. Micah prophesied that the Messiah-King would come to shepherd God's people in righteousness forever.

KEY CONCEPT

Though there is a future judgment, there is also a future hope.

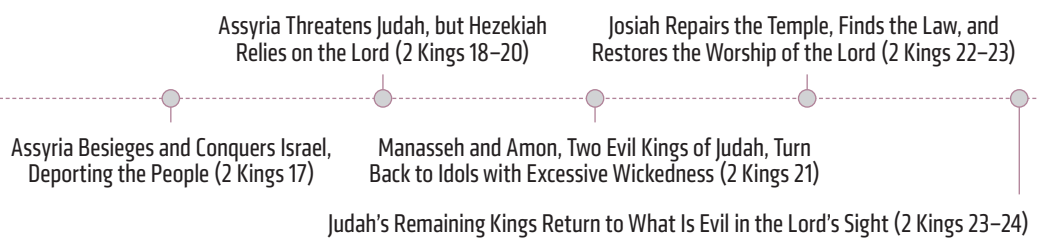
As you examine Micah 5:1-5; 6:6-8; 7:8-9,18-20:

- Emphasize God's desire for His people to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with Him.
- Recognize that disobedience results in judgment, but God's grace and mercy abound as well.



TIMELINE

SESSION STUDY: Micah Prophecies to Israel and Judah (Micah 1–7)



Daily Readings

- ☐ **Day 1:** Micah 1–7
- ☐ **Day 2:** Isaiah 40–54
- ☐ **Day 3:** Isaiah 55–66
- ☐ **Day 4:** Nahum 1–3
- ☐ **Day 5:** Zephaniah 1–3
- ☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 73



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

AMID JUDGMENT, THERE IS A FUTURE HOPE OF THE ONE WHO WILL BRING PEACE (MICAH 5:1-6; 6:6-8).

Underline the prophecies that point to the exile that would be coming.
Circle the prophecies that point to Jesus.

1 Now, daughter who is under attack, you slash yourself in grief; a siege is set against us! They are striking the judge of Israel on the cheek with a rod. **2** Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times. **3** Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of the ruler's brothers will return to the people of Israel. **4** He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD his God. They will live securely, for then his greatness will extend to the ends of the earth. **5** He will be their peace. When Assyria invades our land, when it marches against our fortresses, we will raise against it seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. **6** They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with a drawn blade. So he will rescue us from Assyria when it invades our land, when it marches against our territory.

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6 What should I bring before the LORD when I come to bow before God on high? Should I come before him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? **7** Would the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand streams of oil? Should I give my firstborn for my transgression, the offspring of my body for my own sin? **8** Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God.

The book of Micah is listed in our Bibles in the division of the Minor Prophets, but the term “minor” only refers to the length of their message, not the significance of it. The prophet Micah was a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, and his message from God was directed to the cities of Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah).

Micah's prophecy in chapter 5 opens with Jerusalem being attacked by her enemies. At one point, Assyria was on Jerusalem's doorstep, but the future threat of Babylon may also have been in mind.¹ (“Nimrod” in v. 6 was associated with both Assyria and Babylon; see Gen. 10:8-12.) More important than the attacker, however, was the Lord's promised help—the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This Shepherd-King would be born in Bethlehem from the line of David, and He would be a ruler for Israel over the whole earth. This Messiah is the hope and peace of all God's people to rescue them from their enemies.

LEADER NOTE: Micah 5 illustrates the “now-and-not-yet” property of some biblical prophecy. The Assyrians had already taken Israel captive and set their sights on Jerusalem. While Micah referred to the future coming of the Messiah, he prophesied in the context of immediate danger. Israel and Judah faced the consequences of sinful rebellion, and they were desperate for salvation and rescue. King Hezekiah’s faith in the Lord prevented the Assyrians from bringing judgment on Judah (2 Kings 19), but ultimately judgment would fall on Judah through the Babylonians (20:12-19).

CHRIST CONNECTION

Micah tells of the One who would come from Bethlehem to shepherd the people and be their peace. This is one of the prophecies about Jesus, who came to be the Good Shepherd and the Prince of Peace.

How has Jesus, the Messiah, brought peace into your life?

In Micah 6:6-8, we see the people of Judah question what God required of them. Verses 6-7 list various offerings someone could make because of their sin. The people even wondered if they should sacrifice a firstborn son for their sins, a pagan, idolatrous practice that God forbade (Jer. 19:5). The only firstborn son the Lord ever accepted as a sacrifice was His own—the sinless, only begotten Son of God, who died on the cross and rose again to cover our sins.

In verse 8, Micah listed what God actually required of His people. God did not want perpetual blood offerings or sacrifices, nor did He require magnificent feats for His name. The Lord wanted His people to act in a way that was good, right, and fair, to love faithfulness to God and one another, and to live in humble submission to God and with God.

LEADER NOTE: Micah’s audience wanted to evade the coming judgment, but they did not love God, as was evidenced by their disobedience and idolatry. In the New Testament, John said, “This is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden” (1 John 5:3). Worship and obedience go hand in hand.

What might it look like for you to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with God?

EVIL WOULD BE JUDGED, BUT GOD WOULD ALSO PROVIDE A WAY OF SALVATION (MICAH 7:8-9,18-20).

Circle the contrasting phrases in the passage. Then highlight the actions God takes to champion for His people.

8 Do not rejoice over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will stand up; though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. **9** Because I have sinned against him, I must endure the LORD's fury until he champions my cause and establishes justice for me. He will bring me into the light; I will see his salvation. . . . **18** Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity and passing over rebellion for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not hold on to his anger forever because he delights in faithful love. **19** He will again have compassion on us; he will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. **20** You will show loyalty to Jacob and faithful love to Abraham, as you swore to our ancestors from days long ago.

At this point in the book of Micah, Jerusalem was experiencing moral destitution. Evil was prevalent, and Micah felt like the only righteous person left (vv. 1-2). The Lord's impending judgment on the nation was certain because of their sin and disobedience (v. 9). And yet, Micah declared that those who repented would see the Lord's salvation.

While punishment for sin is inevitable, Micah encouraged the people, saying that God had not completely turned away from them. He would allow their enemies to take them into exile, but in His mercy, God would bring them back to the land. He would provide the way for them to be restored to Him again.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

THE GOSPEL: The gospel is both an event and a story. First, it is an event that took place in history, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinners (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:21). Second, it is also the story of redemption that God planned "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), which runs through Scripture and culminates in a restored and redeemed creation—a new heaven and new earth where sin, death, and suffering will never again plague humanity, and God's people will live with Him forever (Isa. 25:8; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21). The event and story do not exist apart from or in conflict with one another but together inspire us to a life of devotion and mission.

LEADER NOTE: Believers in Jesus today don't experience God's wrath the same way that Israel did in the Old Testament, but this doesn't mean we should take sin lightly. God still disciplines His children for their sin, but the difference is we know that Jesus Himself experienced God's judgment and wrath on our behalf. Our response to this truth should be one of humility and gratitude. It is the height of grace and mercy that Jesus, fully God and fully man, would step between us and God's wrath and take it on Himself.

How have you experienced God's promise of restoration for His people?

Micah 7:18-20 uses many action verbs, and most of them are God's actions in response to the sins of the people. God does not hang their sins over their head forever, but when they repent, He forgives, passes over, does not hold on to, vanquishes, and casts their sins into the sea. To use this many descriptions of how God would forget their sin shows how much Micah wanted to emphasize God's eternal covenant-keeping that endures.

Despite the sins of the people, God would not abandon the promise He made to Israel. God's faithfulness to forgive sin and have compassion on His people is an essential attribute—it is tied to His name (Ex. 34:5-7). Micah praised the Lord for His uniqueness in love, grace, and forgiveness to remind the people of who God is so they could have hope in their coming exile.

LEADER NOTE: When we dwell in our sin, we are not acting as those who have been purchased by Jesus's blood. Those who have received freedom from sin should not use that as an opportunity to continue in sin but to walk forward in godliness and love (Gal. 5:13-14). When we are tempted to dwell in our past sins and not walk in freedom, our response should be to love our brothers and sisters, and this will help us out of our sorrows into the blessing of serving one another.

How should you address your struggles with sin in light of God's faithfulness and forgiveness?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

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"There is no greater state than to get up from your knees knowing that in God's sight you are clean, that He has forgiven every sin you've ever committed."²

—R. C. Sproul (1939–2017)

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: Before the session, think of a book or movie you've read or watched multiple times. Bring that book, movie, or a photo of its cover with you. To begin, share a brief overview of the plot, and say, "Even though I know what's going to happen in this story, I still read/watch it over and over." Engage participants in considering a book or movie that they too love to relive.

TRANSITION: Every great story has its hero or heroine as well as its villain. Every great story has times of peril and times of victory. We love these stories because they reveal the truth of the history of our world: there is good and bad, and yet, there is always hope.

CONTEXT

SUMMARIZE: Last week we looked at the godly leadership of Hezekiah and Josiah: they lived according to God's Word, destroyed idols, and led others to worship God alone. But as you probably know or guessed, eventually the people of Judah followed in the footsteps of their northern counterparts, turning away from God. Just as God sent prophets of warning and truth to the Northern Kingdom, He also sent prophets to Judah. Sadly, most of those prophets encountered deaf ears and hard hearts. But God's covenant was not dependent upon the faithfulness of Israel; He would bring every promise to fruition because He is faithful. But Judah certainly would go through the valley in the waiting.

RECAP

ASK: What key words would you use to summarize Micah's messages to Israel and Judah? How did these passages challenge you? How were you reminded of hope and mercy? Which verse(s) stood out specifically to you?

TRANSITION: Micah came on the scene with a message of judgment at a pivotal point in the histories of Israel and Judah. Yet in the midst of the promise of God's judgment, Micah also promised hope. As he pointed out his people's sin, he also pointed ahead to peace from God.



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Key Concept: Though there is a future judgment, there is also a future hope.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 100 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Judgment and Mercy.” Recreate this table on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with the Scripture text.

Judgment and Mercy	
Read the passages below and compare God’s holy judgment to His loving compassion.	
GOD’S HOLY JUDGMENT	GOD’S LOVING COMPASSION
	MICAH 5:1-6
	MICAH 6:6-8
	MICAH 7:8-9
	MICAH 7:18-20

SETTING: Explain that we don’t know much about the prophet Micah, but his stern words observed the imminent fall of Samaria (Israel) as he also warned the people of Jerusalem (Judah).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Micah 5:1-6 and 6:6-8 aloud.

CONNECT: Point out that verse 1 revealed the dire situation for Judah, but verse 2 immediately pointed to a redeemer. Ask: “What do we observe about this redeemer in Micah 5:2?” As a group, make notes on the chart of God’s acts of holiness and judgment in these passages in response to the disobedience of His people. Then read back through the passages to search for and record words of God’s mercy and compassion. Reread Micah 6:8 aloud, and ask: “Who were these words directed to? How do these requirements from God relate to God’s judgment and God’s compassion?” Record conclusions on the chart.

READ: Invite another volunteer to read Micah 7:8-9,18-20 aloud.

Notes

ENGAGE: Point out the repetition of the word “I” in Micah 7:8-9 and help your group think about the future hope these words would have been for Judah. Say: “From the first sin in the Bible in Genesis 3, we can see that disobedience results in judgment. But we’ve also seen an overflow of God’s grace and mercy.” As a group, consider again the judgment and the compassion of God in these passages. Focus on Micah 7:18 and consider how this verse reflects Exodus 34:6-7. Record your findings on the chart.

DEBRIEF

If these were the only Scriptures you had about God, what could you observe about Him?

(PSG p. 100) Why is it important for our sharing of the gospel to speak the truth about God, that He is both the righteous judge and the giver of mercy?

SUMMARIZE

Display **Pack Item 12: Who Is Like You?** where your group can see it. Say: “God is almighty, holy, and sovereign; He alone sets the standard for His world and His people. And because He is righteous, He punishes sin. But amid this judgment, He is also gracious and compassionate, full of love and mercy. So the Lord has made a way back to Himself, regardless of the transgressions we have committed. These words were true for the Israelites and they are true for us: God is both holy judge and compassionate rescuer. In Jesus, we see all His purpose for eternity—justice and mercy—perfected.”

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 101). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Sometimes we get stuck in our own heads about our sin. We can swing the pendulum from wallowing in our sin to shrugging off our sin as not a big deal. Either way, we are not treating sin the way God demonstrates it should be treated. Yes, God offers His forgiveness to all those who repent and believe in Jesus. But we must never forget that our punishment for sin wasn’t swept under a rug—it was paid by the death of Christ in our place.

What are some reasons we fail to deal with our sin as we should?



HEART: Our weaknesses are opportunities for God to reveal His strength. As we saw in Micah 7:8-9, though we experience turmoil, discipline for our sin, and darkness, God mercifully steps in and is the very thing that we need the most. God lifts us up when we fall. God is the light in our darkness. God is justice and salvation even when we sin.



How do you need the Lord to be your light, your champion, your justice, and your salvation today?



HANDS: God's forgiveness for sin is the most marvelous and miraculous thing to ever occur. What is even more amazing is the fact that God is all-knowing and He chooses to forget our sins and not hold them against us. When we are sinned against, it may be easy to say the words "I forgive you," but it is far more difficult not to allow the wrong done to negatively shape how we view the offender. The Lord, however, has no problem being just and forgiving because He has punished our sins and forgiven us our sins in His Son, Jesus Christ.

How can you use opportunities to forgive to share the gospel and point others to Jesus Christ?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Choose one significant passage from this week's study and begin committing it to memory. Ask God to make that passage a blessing in your life and in the lives of others as you share it.
- Meditate on Micah 6:8 this week. As you do, analyze your own walk and consider how carefully you are obeying these requirements from God.
- Review the list of all the ways you saw God's compassion in the core passages. Use that as a starting point for your personal worship this week.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 101 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 73:21-28 with your group, praising God for His justice and compassion toward His people.

References

1. Kenneth L. Barker, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, vol. 20, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 95.
2. R. C. Sproul, The Prayer of the Lord (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2009), 85.

