

**Bible Study Class**  
**Clayton Presbyterian Church**  
**Lesson 5 Micah**

Opening prayer: Lord, we thank you for this message from the prophet Micah who obeyed your commands and spread your word to the people not only in his day but throughout the centuries that have followed him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Today chapter 7. Most of today's comments have come from David Guzik's Blue Letter Study Guide on Micah 7. Next Sunday with will talk about Jude.

**Chapter 7 Pardoning all iniquity because of who God is and what He does**

In his final chapter Micah has become depressed and distressed at the state of his people who have plainly disregarded the messages he has received from God. The Pulpit Commentary sees in Micah's opening words a representation of the sentiment of the whole nation. But the context displays a very personal and very emotional reaction of the prophet to the decadence of the people rather than the people's repentance. Micah like other Old Testament prophets becomes emotionally involved to the point where he cries out to the Lord. God always intends His servants to personally experience the message they proclaim.

**Read** Micah 7: 1-4 An honest confession of their sinful state.

V 1-4 The prophet confesses that God is accurate in His complaint against Israel. On behalf of the sinful nation, the Prophet Micah now confesses the sin of God's people. First, he recognizes that their sin has left them impoverished there is no cluster to eat of the first-ripe fruit which my soul desires. Micah feels like the last few grapes left on the vine after the harvest for the gleaners who can't afford the first fruits. Schultz uses this verse as a further explanation for Jesus curing the fig tree.

**Read** Matthew 21: 18-19

Jesus expresses God's sentiment both in His weeping over Jerusalem and in His cursing of the fig tree.

V 2 Micah longs for the days of the rich harvest. The righteous have gone from the land. Then he describes some of their specific sins and their general character, revealing their deeply ingrained sin against others. The meaning of the image in vs. 1 becomes clear in vs. 2. The figs represent the godly in the land, which have been swept away. Jeremiah elaborates on the picture in one of his visions where he sees Israel as two baskets with figs, very good figs and very bad one. The good figs represent the good people who will be led into Babylonian

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captivity; the bad figs stand for the evil members of the nation who will perish in the land. A few righteous people can save a whole nation. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah could have been spared by ten righteous people or less. The Lord told Abraham, in answer to his prayer for Sodom: "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." *Genesis 18:32*. Adam Clarke's commentary explains "Each hunts his brother with a net." "This appears to be an allusion to the ancient mode of duel between two men. One held a casting net, which he endeavored to throw over the head of his antagonist, that he might then kill him with his short sword. The other deflected the cast; and when the thrower missed, he was obliged to run about the field to get time to set his net in right order for another throw. While he ran, the other followed, that he might kill him before he could get into the proper position with his net.

V 3 The princes and judges are all charging high prices for their services. Have you noticed how the price of gasoline changes each time there is a change in the weather or political climate?

V 4. This takes the picture back to the vineyard where, instead of fruit bearing vines, one finds only briars and thorns. When the sinner is immersed in sin and feeling successful, they feel like there is no price to pay for their sin. But there are watchmen who know more than they realize.

**Read Micah 7: 5-7** Crumbling relationships among God's people.

V 5-6 Micah describes this entanglement as a series of relationships gone wrong. There is in vs. 5 a series of examples of bonds of deepening intimacy from neighbor to friend to lover. Vs. 6 takes this even further into blood bonds. These should all be natural and harmonious relationships but they have become corrupt. God's visitation does not cause relationships to go sour; it reveals the effects of sin in the life of man. When fellowship is broken vertically, it breaks down horizontally also. God's presence brings to light what was hidden under the surface. Because of their rampant sin and selfishness, personal relationships have crumbled among God's people. One cannot trust in a friend or put confidence in a companion, and even blood relatives are at war with each other. You have to keep your silence even from your wife or husband.

**Read Matthew 10:34-36**

This seems to be a direct quote from Micah. In this sin-immersed culture, there are few people to give confidence or compassion - so one can only look to the Lord.

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This is a bad thing, because people should be honorable and trustworthy enough so that we can find confidence and compassion from them.

**Read** Hebrews 4:12-13

The abscess of man's soul has to be lanced by the sword of God's Word in order to bring about healing. The purpose of Jesus' coming is not to bring about animosity in human relations but to expose the existing corruption for the purpose of healing. The same is true of Micah's prophecy. God's visitations are never for the purpose of judgment but always for salvation.

V 7 Micah addresses his enemies in verses 7-10. Micah gives guidance to people as he says that he will wait for the God of his salvation. Predicting judgment to come is one of the most depressing parts of the ministry of a prophet. Nevertheless, God can use this as a good thing, because it forces people to put their trust in the only One who can never let them down - the God of my salvation.

**Read** Micah 7:8-10 The humble state of God's people

V 8-10 Micah speaks for those brought low by personal sin and the sin of the community. In their humble place, he warns their enemies to not rejoice over their condition because when I fall, I will arise and when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. "You see me brought low now, but you should know that it isn't for long. God will lift me up." Speaking for the sinful people, Micah "manfully" takes responsibility for their sin. The idea is, "I know that I have sinned, and so I will accept my correction." Micah knows that God's people will stay in their low place until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. They are totally abandoned unto God's care. Morgan says, "Herein is discovered the difference between remorse and penitence. In remorse a man is sorry for himself; he mourns over his sin because it has brought suffering to him. In penitence he is grieved by the wrong sin has done to God; he yields his personal suffering in the confidence because God uses the suffering to free from his sin." At the same time, there is complete confidence in the salvation of God and their vindication before their enemies. This shows that God's people know their sinful state, but they also know the greatness of God's redemption. The enemy that taunted "where is your God?" will be ashamed of their taunts. Micah says that they will be trodden down like mud in the streets. The Assyrians attacked many of the towns of Judah after they had exiled the people of Israel. During the reign of Hezekiah, they came very close to the city of Jerusalem. They sent envoys to try arrange a peaceful surrender

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bragging that their gods hadn't been defeated. But Hezekiah, advised by Isaiah, didn't agree with them but instead went into the temple to pray.

**Read** Isaiah 37:33-36

Hezekiah had a lot of reasons to worry but Isaiah assures him that this army won't harm Jerusalem even though they had conquered several towns in Judah on their way to Jerusalem. One of the things that Hezekiah believed was that the Assyrians were not attacking him or his possessions so much as they were attacking God.

**Read** Micah 7:11-13 The restored city of the people of God.

V 11-13 Micah speaks to the nation of Israel. This is a prophecy of the coming punishment. The exile that is carried out by Assyria and Babylon. The restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of its walls are symbolic for the renewal of God's revelation in this world. This is obvious from the coming of Assyria and Egypt to Jerusalem, not to conquer but to be saved. The people did in fact return from captivity and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt under Nehemiah, but those events were merely an outward expression of a greater spiritual reality.

When the time comes for Israel's restoration, God will send a call out far and wide to gather and restore His people. When God gathers Israel for restoration, they will come to a desolate land, ruined because of the judgment of God on the sin of His people. Both Assyria and Babylon destroyed the land as well as its people. They weren't concerned with the environment or conservation. The land of Israel had become desolate during the captivity. The captivity was the 'fruit of the evil doings of people who had lived there. We have to remember that this is the Promised Land that God had given to the twelve tribes of Israel. Their covenant with God involved the land. They were supposed to honor the land that the Lord had given them. They even had a command to let the land rest every seven years. They hadn't followed that command. Today we can see signs of how our environment suffers because we haven't cared for it properly. *The Adam Clarke's Commentary* understands the text to be a reaching forward to the Captivity, at which time Israel will demonstrate understanding of the punishment for her sins and hope in God for the future. Other scholars believe that the prophet speaks for himself.

**Read** Micah 7:14-15 God cares for His people as in days of old.

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V 14 Addresses God. This verse is a prayer for the renewal of the former manifestations of grace. At the end of his prophecy, he lays down his office and commits his charge to God. Others see this as a prayer of the people facing captivity, asking for restoration. The rod is at times the shepherd's staff, although more frequently the symbol of chastisement. God's chastisement of His people is an austere form of His love. Micah' prayer was ultimately fulfilled in the coming of Him who said: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11.

V 15 The Lord answers this prayer with the promise that He will renew for His people the wonders of the olden times. The return of Israel from captivity is compared to the exodus from Egypt. The Biblical record does not report any supernatural occurrences when the Jews returned to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and the wall of the city in 535 and 444 BC. The implication is that God's promise reaches beyond the event of the return from captivity to a greater deliverance and restoration of Israel as a kingdom of priests in the future. There is undoubtedly a reference to the coming of the Messiah in those words but probably also to events that will occur in apocalyptic times. After God's people are brought back to the place they belong, they are lovingly cared for by the Lord Himself. Micah calls on the Lord to feed his people. He asks for them to learn the Law. There was a time when God's people enjoyed this kind of close relationship with Him. Now, that previous relationship will be restored, and He will show them wonders. The wonders come out of the close relationship with the Shepherd. We have witnessed in the twentieth century the miracle of the return of the Jews to Palestine and the forming of the state of Israel. In terms of territory and military power, Israel should have been swept off the map by the numerically overwhelming forces of the Arab countries. Their survival borders on the supernatural.

**Read** Habakkuk 3: 16-19

Habakkuk countered his feeling of depression by reaching beyond judgment to God's grace.

**Read** Micah 7: 16-17 The nations are brought low before restored Israel.

V 16-17 God is addressed again through the end of the chapter. When Israel is restored to the land and enjoys a restored relationship with the Lord, then those who opposed God's people will see how wrong they were to fight against them.

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Seeing the greatness of God's restoration will make the nations respect the Lord in a way they didn't before. They will see the power and love of God in action. The reference to the snake in vs. 17 is not merely a figure of speech; it projects the picture of the first temptation on earth when Satan presented himself to Eve in the form of a snake and God condemned the reptile to crawl on his belly and eat dust all the days of his life. The ultimate answer to Micah's prayer will be when Satan, who is behind all human rebellion against God, is finally and totally defeated. That will be a victory with which no miracle from Exodus can compare.

**Read** Micah 7:18-20

V 18-19 These two verses are Micah's praise of God for His mercy and grace. In verse 18 he is referring to his own name. "It is a theme verse and appropriately ends the book. For it is a play on Micah's name. Micah means 'Who is like Yahweh?' "There is no one or thing to which God can be compared, because He has no equal. He is greatest when He pardons sins. He alone can forgive sin. The exodus of the human soul from the bondage of sin far surpasses anything Israel experienced when leaving Egypt. That is the theme of the concluding verses of this book. It is a song of praise to God for what He has done with the sins of His children. Micah did not know how God would forgive the sins of the remnant of His inheritance. He merely understood that God would forgive.

**Mark 2: 7** "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus' claim to be able to forgive sins was taken by the religious leaders as a claim to deity—which they considered to be blasphemous. In light of the glorious restoration of the Lord, Micah glorifies the God of such great forgiveness pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. Micah sees that God's forgiveness is so great, that it can't even be compared to what often passes for forgiveness among men. Why does God have such great mercy and forgiveness to His people? The reasons are in Him, not in His people. It is simply because He delights in mercy. God opens His hand of mercy to all who will receive it, but those who will not receive His mercy can blame only themselves. God isn't always merciful because here comes time when the guilty must be punished. God's judgments are in themselves expressions of mercy, because they are like the cutting away of cancer. The surgery hurts, but must take place or the whole body will die. We should be grateful that there is only one

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unpardonable sin - the sin of rejecting His mercy. Spurgeon says "All objections to the delight of God in mercy are but illusions of your brain, or delusions of your heart." Take care, as you expect the mercy of God, to deal it out to others. Never say, 'I won't forgive,' for you seal your own condemnation when you do, and if you forgive not your brother his trespasses neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. You have chosen your own destruction when you shut the door against your child, or against your neighbor. Schultz comments on the expression that our sins are sent to the depths of the sea. There are still some areas of the ocean that mankind hasn't been able to explore even with sophisticated equipment such as that used to explore the wreckage of the Titanic.

Grace sets God apart from all other gods. God's people once knew His compassion, but they resisted and rejected it. Now they can know it again, confident that He will again have compassion on us. He loves us as sinners, but loves us too much to leave us there. His compassion saves us from our sin. His compassion is shown in that the Lord will cast all our sins in to the depths of the sea. The Dutch lady, Corrie ten Boom observed that God added a sign to the place that reads "Fishing Forbidden!" God will not "hold on" to our sin, but forgive us instead. This means there is no "probation" with God's forgiveness. He doesn't forgive our sins just to leave them around to hang over our head. His compassion is shown in that the Lord will give truth to Jacob. In concluding His prophecy, Micah sees God's future work as a continuation of His past work to the fathers of Israel. Micah knew that the same love, compassion, and mercy He showed to their fathers was available to them - if they received it in faith.

V 20 God will perform His promises to Abraham and Jacob because He is truth, and He can show mercy. Micah's appeal to God's promises to Abraham and Jacob puts the grace of God on a legal basis. God has made a covenant with mankind through the ancestry of the people of Israel. It is on the basis of this legal contract that every human being can obtain pardon of sin and salvation by accepting God's offer in the person of Jesus Christ.

Micah lived up to his name in exalting God. Micah spoke those prophetic words at the onset of the long and dark night of the ruin of his country and the captivity of his people. Before darkness set in, God kindled a light to see His children through. He still does the same for us.

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**Closing prayer based on Micah 7: 7** Heavenly Father, we choose to serve You in spirit and truth and to watch and wait expectantly for You. Help us to make the right choices in our lives and thank You that even when we prove faithless You are faithful and true. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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| Micah 7: 1-4   | Matthew 21: 18-19 | Isaiah 37:33-36   |
| Micah 7: 5-7   | Matthew 10:34-36  | Habakkuk 3: 16-19 |
| Micah 7:8-10   | Hebrews 4:12-13   |                   |
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| Micah 7:11-13  |                   |                   |
| Micah 7:14-15  |                   |                   |
| Micah 7: 16-17 |                   |                   |
| Micah 7:18-20  |                   |                   |