

"Pray, Watch and Hope"

Micah 7

As we come to the end of the book of Micah let's recap the book so far. Micah ministered to both the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom of Israel during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and the end of Hezekiah's reign, most likely in the early days of Hezekiah's son Manasseh's days. His ministry may have been as long as 50/60 years from approximately 740-687 BC. He would have known and possibly worked with the prophet Isaiah and possibly Amos as well.

Micah came from a small rural Eastern Ontario rural type community in Moresheth, a small town southwest of Jerusalem near the border of Gath of the Philistines. We don't know the details of how God called him but he trusted God's leading in his life even if it meant leaving a quiet, contented life for the life of God's prophet; confronting Israel's religious and political leaders, false prophets and kings pronouncing judgment. And we have seen that. God saw the leaders' injustice, mistreatment of the poor, stealing the land, abusing God's laws and the false prophets' false hope messages for a price.

In his time Micah saw the Northern Kingdom go into exile but also the miraculous intervention of God when Assyria surrounded Jerusalem and Hezekiah. Hezekiah humbled himself before God through the ministry of Isaiah and Micah, praying for God to deliver His people based on His promises, and God did exactly that. God struck the Assyrian army with a plague that night and they left Jerusalem, never to return to Israel.

But complacency has a tendency to come into our lives when things are going well. And our devotion to God and love for people wains, as Hezekiah's did. And his son Manasseh began his reign introducing all kinds of idolatrous practices to the southern kingdom. So when Micah confronts his generation in Micah 6 about their sin, their complacent attitude responds, 'Fine! What does God want? How many sacrifices does he need? How about our first born?' And God responds through Micah,

He has shown 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.

Live the way God stipulates in the Word. Show your love for God by loving people. Treat them the way God would. Live by His Word (justly), forgive as He forgives (mercy) and don't let pride and complacency sneak into your life.

As we come to the last chapter of the book, Micah continues with this recurring theme of judgment and future hope. He believes in God's promises to Israel of restoration to their land, of a future Messiah and of a reign of peace for the remnant of Israel (not all). The key verses are v.7 and 18-20.

⁷ *But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me*

¹⁸ *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.

¹⁹ *You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.*

²⁰ *You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.*

Micah prays for the nation of Israel and intercedes for them in a prayer of repentance because he believes in God who will relent of judgment when his people humble themselves and pray for forgiveness. And then he shows why he believes that in the last 13 verses because of who God is and what He has promised in His Word. V. 7 gives us our outline:

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me

He is confident God is hearing his prayer for forgiveness of the nation, for which he will now watch and wait to see what God will do because His hope is in God whose promises always come true and who never wavers on His Word. But pray, watch and hope are the challenge to every child of God who needs to repent of sin or is waiting on God to fulfil His promises in their life or for the world. This is always the pattern for all of us; we pray, we wait because of hope.

Micah, assumes a position of humility as he calls on God

Praying for People to Repent of their Sins **(7:1-7)**

Like Daniel, like Samuel, like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Moses and all God's prophets, Micah intercedes for his own family, the people of Israel, to repent of their sins. He has mentioned many of them in Ch.'s 1, 2, and 6. He now reviews some of them in 7:1-7. He laments that he's the only godly one, no doubt an exaggeration, but they are few and far between. The bulk of people are more interested in using people to advance their own causes, citing the leaders who are leading the way in injustice

*Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts,
the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire— they all conspire together.*

Because of their sin Micah reminds them that judgment – via the Babylonian exile – will come.

The day of your watchmen has come, the day God visits you. Now is the time of their confusion.

“The day when God visits you” is a reference to a day of Lord type judgment. Most Israelites believed only that the Day of the Lord meant God will visit them and bless them and rid them of all their enemies. This is why they will be confused. Amos said the same thing in Amos 5:18,

¹⁸ *Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light.*

God always purges before He cleans, judges before He restores. Suffering always precedes glory. They didn't get it. He warns them that in that day don't trust those closest to you because when things get really bad people will do anything to survive. And Jerusalem would get so bad in 587 BC after the Babylonians had surrounded Jerusalem for weeks, depriving them of food and water, that we read in Lamentations that a few people boiled their own children to survive. An awful, awful time.

Why does Micah point out again some of their sins? Because

Confession precedes repentance (vv.1-7)

To repent means to do a U-turn, to turn 180 degrees around in the exact opposite way in which you were going. So to repent means to stop the sin you were doing and go in the right direction. But I can't go in the opposite right direction if I haven't realized I was going the wrong way in the first place. God always says in His Word that in order to repent you can't just stop doing the wrong thing, you have to replace it by doing the right thing. If you struggle with an area of sin in your life, then choose to do the opposite in obedience to God to help you in your battle against sin.

Micah believed God would change the hearts of some of His people. He'd done it before, He'll do it again. So pray for people to confess their sin so they will repent and

Believe God will change hearts (v.7)

The reason why Micah believes is pointed out in v.7

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me

Micah believes in prayer or better in God who answers the prayers of His people who pray what His Word says. God will restore Israel one day which means God will change the hearts of some people. The apostle Paul echoes this in Rom.

11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶ and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

"The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Right now more Gentiles are being saved than Jewish people. But this hardening is "in part" i.e. temporary. A day is coming when Jesus returns that the remnant of Israelites remaining on earth at the end of 7 years of tribulation will be saved. So this works two ways: at present God is saving many Gentiles but He has a number in mind. That means some Gentiles we share the gospel with will get saved. On the other hand, God is going to turn back to Israel and so we pray confidently for Him to save some of them. So don't stop praying for the salvation of Jews. God will save some of them most certainly since Jesus has yet to return.

Micah said he will watch and see what God is going to do. Likewise, as we pray, we must rest confidently in God and

Watch How God will Work in People's Lives **(7:8-17)**

Micah swings back to an encouraging note here in the rest of the book. He believes in the promises in God's Word concerning Israel. Even though now they are predominantly rejecting God and facing exile he also knows, prays and watches for

How God will reverse world circumstances (vv.8-9)

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.⁹ Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the LORD's wrath, until he pleads my case and establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness.

Notice how Micah explains why Israel is being beaten up by the nations. Because of their own sin God has allowed it. If God can do this for His own people, what's He going to do when its time to punish the nations who have mistreated Israel? Gen. 12:3 is always in affect:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."² *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.*

³*I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*

These promises to Abraham have never been revoked. They are happening and will happen. God will deal with those nations who turned their backs on Israel. There are very few countries in the world today who stand up for Israel. The USA and Canada historically have but Canada less so under the Trudeau administration. President Obama did not support Israel but Trump has. And traditionally both of our countries have had a strong Christian foundation and Christians generally pray for and defend Israel. Not that everything Israel does is right since they as a nation are not walking with God. But one day God will reverse the circumstances in the world and place Israel on top when Jesus returns.

And the only way that will occur is because God will

Miraculously change the hearts (vv.10-13)

The enemies will be ashamed Micah said when they see God's people respond in faith and walk with Him once again, as He lifts them up over their adversaries. This is a miracle because no one outside of faith in Jesus will see this coming. Even then Micah prophesies (as did Isaiah in Is. 19) that people from Assyria (modern day Iraq) and Egypt (both Muslim countries) will come to Jerusalem to worship along side saved Jew, Jesus as Messiah and Yahweh, not Allah and his prophet Muhammed, as their God. That will be a miracle. Watch for it, Micah tells us.

The only way that will happen is

For God to restore Israel (vv.14-17)

Micah, along with al the prophets, warned of exile but also promised restoration in the future. First a heart restoration, a return to God and their covenant with Him.

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 as in days long ago.

The command to "shepherd your people" is most likely a reference to the Messiah who will lead Israel as Micah already prophesied back in 5:2

"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."³ Therefore

Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. ⁴ 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.

Those nations who do not turn to God will be ashamed and laid low when Jesus returns and establishes His 1000 rule on earth. All these prophecies refer to that time period. All this because God alone gives us Hope. These last 3 verses are rich. Micah encourages all God's people to

Hope in God Alone to Fulfil His Promises **(7:18-20)**

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.

Hope in God alone for the forgiveness of sins (vv.18-19)

God is promising Israel one day that he will forgive them of their sins of rejecting Him. We read earlier in Rom. 11:25 that 'all Israel will be saved', but we have to understand that from an Old Testament context we read that in the 7 years of tribulation (70th week of Daniel) prior to Jesus' return the Antichrist will try and wipe out all Jews. Zech 13 says He will wipe out 2/3 of the nation (9 million Jews if that were to happen today)/ But the 1/3 who survive that time period, who are alive when Jesus returns, will turn in faith to Him. This is what Paul is referring to. That's how God can forgive their sins and bring all these blessings He promised through Abraham, David and Jeremiah.

But our hope is in God to forgive our sins too. Through faith in Jesus, who died for our sins, we receive forgiveness. Sin is the barrier that separates us from God. Only through Jesus is there a way to God (John 14:6). God pardons, forgives, doesn't stay angry, treads our sins underfoot and hurls them into the depths of the sea because He will show compassion to those who repent. That's a guarantee.

For He is faithful to His Word (v.20)

What a great way to end his book:

*You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham,
as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.*

Some Christians don't believe this verse. They think all God's promises to Israel have been revoked and they all apply to the church now. But that's not what that verse says, is it? Oh, people argue, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament already. No, Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic Law requirements on how to get to God through a sacrifice, thus fulfilling the Law, not the Old Testament. All kinds of verses about the future that haven't been fulfilled yet. And then you have to spiritualize all these Old Testament promises like this one, into saying something it does not.

However, all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for all God's people. So this pattern of praying, watching and hope is always there for all God's people. This is what we're all called to do. Pray for people to repent of their sins, to confess their need for saving and to place their trust in God through Jesus. Pray for God to work in people's lives and watch in faith with whom (always a surprise) and how (always amazing testimonies) He'll do it. Watch what God is doing in Israel as well. Right now, the nations are not friendly towards them and it will get worse before it gets better.

And keep your hope in discouraging times when you don't see answers to prayer yet. God called the prophets Israel's watchmen. We see this here, in Ezekiel, Isaiah and Habakkuk especially. Like the prophets, we who know the Lord are to keep trusting in hope that His Word will come true exactly as He said it will. Don't stop praying for the hearts of your friends and family to change. For God to reconcile relationships, for miracles of healing and salvation. He's always working, always willing to show compassion, love and forgiveness and graciously delaying His end time plan so that more people can get saved. Who and what are you praying for today? Believe and watch in a God who works miracles. Place your hope only in Him because His Word is true.

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