

PARK STREET CHURCH
Introduction to Micah:
Prophet "Outside the Beltway"
MICAH CHAPTER ONE
Perry Phillips
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1) Review

- a) Micah's background:
 - i) Family history not given, unlike other prophets (e.g., like Isaiah or Jeremiah). More like Amos. Note for Joel we have his father's name but not where he is from. For Habakkuk we have neither!
 - ii) He's from the city of Moresheth (Maresha) in the foothills west of Jerusalem (Cf. map and photos).
- b) He delivered God's message during the time of the Judean kings starting with Jotham and ending with Hezekiah (740 – 687 B.C.: 53 years [cf. timeline]).
 - i) We are not implying he prophesied all 53 years.
 - ii) He started his ministry before the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.). Note vs. 6.
 - iii) "Which he saw" (חזוה): Word implies visions and used often for prophets.
- c) The message concerns Samaria and Jerusalem (Cf. historical summary)

2) Micah's message

- a) Micah 1.2 – 5: Beginning of the lawsuit. God is announcing the charges against the defendant.
 - i) Vs. 2
 - (1) Who are the peoples of the earth Micah addresses?
 - (2) What is God's "holy temple?" The "temple" in Jerusalem or his heavenly temple?
 - (3) The "arena" of Samaria and of Jerusalem (Cf. Amos 3.9; Ps 125.2).
 - (4) The indictment: vss. 2 – 5. Dt 4.26; 30.19; 31:28 call upon heaven and earth as witnesses, but here the Lord himself is a witness.
 - (5) Earth: land. Here used for the land of Judah/Israel, not the whole globe, although this is a type of judgement coming upon the entire earth (Mic 5.15?).
 - ii) Vs. 3
 - (1) The Lord is coming out of his place.
 - (a) Note how the phrase "coming out" is used.
 - (b) The word "go out" used of kings going out to war. 2 Sam 5.24; 2 Sam 11.1; Dt 20.1; 21.10; Is 26.21; Zech 14.3.
 - (2) God will "tread the high places."
 - (a) Mountains?
 - (b) False shrines?
 - (3) IMHO, vs. 5 strongly implies the latter—false shrines.
 - iii) Vs. 4 Mountains melt and valleys split open, but there are no volcanos in Israel.
 - iv) Vs. 5
 - (1) Micah concentrates on Samaria, but its destruction will reach the gates of Jerusalem (vs. 9).
 - (2) The reason: idolatry.
 - (3) Note that "Jacob" and "Israel" are synonymous here. This occurs numerous times in Micah (Micah: 2.12, 3.1, 8, 9; cf. Gen 32.28).

- (4) NB: In other places "Israel" stands for the northern tribes and "Judah" for the southern tribes.
 - (5) "What is the transgression of..." and "What is the high places of..." Literally, "what" is "who" in Heb. Note the personalization of sin!
 - (6) 1 Pt 4.17: "For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (Cf. Amos 3.2)
- b) Vss. 6 – 9: The Judgments
- i) Vs. 6
 - (1) Samaria's stones will be "poured" down the hill into the valley like the water pouring down a steep place (vs. 4).
 - (2) "...uncover her foundations..." The word "uncover" is the same one used elsewhere for sexual sin—i.e., "uncovering the nakedness of" (e.g., Lev 20.11, 17). Also used for prostitution (Ezek 16.36; 23.18) and for lewdness (2 Sam 6.20; Hos 2.10). The use of "uncovering" fits in quite well w/ the spiritual lewdness and prostitution carried out in Samaria.
 - (3) "...uncover her foundations..." The word "uncover" is the same one used elsewhere for sexual sin—i.e., "uncovering the nakedness of" (e.g., Lev 20.11, 17). Also used for prostitution (Ezek 16.36; 23.18) and for lewdness (2 Sam 6.20; Hos 2.10). The use of "uncovering" fits in quite well w/ the spiritual lewdness and prostitution carried out in Samaria.
 - ii) Vs. 7
 - (1) A play on words between the city name *Shomrón* and the pieces of the smashed idols *shemamá*.
 - (2) Ritual prostitution relating to Baal worship. Gifts given at the shrines from deceived idol worshipers. Explain what Baal was supposed to do: rain, fertility, healing, rising from the dead.
 - (3) Fees from prostitution were forbidden to be given as gifts to the temple in Jerusalem (Dt 23.17, 18), but the gifts given to the *bamoth* in Samaria will be taken to other *bamoth* in Assyria.
 - iii) Vs. 8
 - (1) Lament for the fall and the desolation of Samaria. Jackals inhabit desolate areas and howl at nite. In Isaiah's "Little Apocalypse" we find similar words: "Thorns will come up in its fortified towers, nettles and thistles in its fortified cities; it will also be a haunt of jackals, an abode of ostriches (or possibly owls)" (Is 34.13).
 - (2) Note the normal way to mourn was to wear sackcloth and put ashes over the head (Cf. Esther 4.1, 3; Jonah 3.6; Mt 11.21; Lk 10.13). But also for seeking God's guidance (Dan 9.3).
 - (3) Going naked may be an extreme form of mourning and/or an indication that the captives of Jerusalem will be leaving naked and shackled (Mic 1.11; Is 20.4: "... so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.")
 - (4) Even though the nation—especially the capitals—deserve judgment, Micah mourns for the coming doom of his people. Ditto for Jeremiah and for Paul re: his Jewish brethren (Rom 9.1 – 3).
 - iv) Vs. 9: The wound that will come to Jerusalem

- (1) It reaches the gate, but does not come in.
- (2) This may refer to the attack on Jerusalem by Sennacherib (701) who reached the gates of Jerusalem but did not conquer it. Note Sennacherib's description of boxing in Hezekiah "like a bird in a cage."
- c) Vss. 10 – 15: Further consequences for Judah
 - i) Vs. 10
 - (1) Micah's prophecies re: Judah given during the time of Sargon's campaign against Philistia (720, 714 – 710 B.C.) and looking ahead to the attack on Judah by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.
 - (2) "Tell it not in Gath...."
 - (a) Major Philistine city
 - (b) Echoes David's lament after the death of Saul and his son Jonathan (2 Sam 1.20)
 - (c) A play on words:
 - (i) *Gath* sounds like the Hebrew for *tell* (*Tell it not in Gath.*)
 - (ii) In Heb.: beGaT al TaGidu
 - (3) Beth-le-aphrah
 - (a) The name means "house of dust [*aphrah*]"
 - (b) A play on words: House of *Aphrah* sounds like the word for dust (*aphar*).
 - (c) "City of *aphrah*, roll in *aphar*."

Why bother w/ this kind of literary pattern?

- (4) Vs. 11
 - (a) *Shaphir* means *pleasant*, but its inhabitants will go out in nakedness and shame.
 - (b) *Zaanán* sounds like the Hebrew for *come out*, although the inhabitants will not come out to fight (because of fear?).
 - (c) *Beth-ezel* ("house of *taking away*, or *withdrawn*") will be *taken away* (by the enemy).
- (5) Vs. 12: *Maroth* sounds like the Hebrew for *bitter*. They wait for good, but disaster [Lit. *evil*] will come, even to the gates of Jerusalem.
- (6) Vs. 13: Lachish
 - (a) The importance of the city cannot be overemphasized
 - (b) "As the last Judean outpost toward Egypt, and on a main road thither, Lachish would receive the Egyptian subsidies of horses and chariots, in which the politicians put their trust instead of in Jehovah" (*ICC Commentary* on Micah).
 - (c) But Lachish was "The beginning of sin for the daughter of Zion"—Lachish was like a gate into the interior. Possibly an idolatrous movement started in Lachish and influenced Jerusalem. [Note the archeological evidence for Hezekiah's reform at Lachish.]
 - (d) Another word play: *Lachish* sounds like the Hebrew for *team* (hook the team to the chariots to flee). Word play: "To the steeds" (Heb. *laréches*) is a play on *Lachish*.
- (7) Vs. 14
 - (a) Who is giving "parting gifts" to Moreshet-gat?
 - (i) Parting *gifts*—or *dowry*. The city name is *moreshet-gath*. One betrothed is called *Me'oreshet* (Deut. 22:23).

- (ii) When the conqueror takes away the city into exile it will be like a bridegroom taking away his wife and her dowry.
- (b) Achzib
 - (i) *Achzib* derives from the word for *deception*: “The houses of *Achzib* shall be a *deceitful thing (achzab)* to the kings of Israel.”
 - (ii) Perhaps because the kings feel this city along w/ other will hold out against the conqueror.
 - (iii) The word “deception” (or “deceitful thing”) is also used for a stream that dries up during the summer (Jer 15.18: a deceptive stream whose water is unreliable).
- (8) Vs. 15
 - (a) Maresha:
 - (i) *Mareshah* sounds like the Hebrew for conqueror (*yoresh*).
 - (ii) A conqueror [*yoresh*] will come against *Mareshah*.
 - (b) The glory of Israel to Adullam
 - (i) “Glory” is taken to mean the rulers and the treasures of Israel
 - (ii) They will take refuge in the cave of Adullam—exactly as David and his men did when trying to escape Saul (1 Sam 22.1).
- (9) Vs. 16: Call for deep mourning over the loss of children carried off into exile (cf. Amos 8.10; Is 3.25).

3) Lessons?