

The Church of the Servant King
Prophecy Series
 (Proph14P_Prophecy in the Prophets_Micah)

Eschatological Passages in Micah

Review of the Chronology of the Prophets

When we first began this series, we looked at a chronology of the ministries of the Old Testament prophets. The chronology I initially presented was obtained from Charles Ryrie's Study Bible.¹ However, as we've progressed in this series, we've had to make some adjustments to the chronology. This was not unanticipated and I had mentioned that other chronologies would reflect a different order than Ryrie. Nevertheless, for the purposes of review, the following chart reflects a comparison between Ryrie's chronology and a revised chronology based upon our study to date. The order within a given time frame does not necessarily reflect the order in which the prophets ministered during that period, since precise dating of some of the prophet's ministries is difficult.

Baseline Ryrie Chronology		Revised Chronology (Prophecy Series to Date)	
9 th to 8 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obadiah • Joel • Jonah • Amos • Hosea 	8 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosea (mid 8th) • Jonah (mid 8th) • Amos (mid 8th) • Micah (mid 8th)
8 th to 7 th Century	Isaiah <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micah Nahum Zephaniah	Late 7 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joel
7 th to 6 th Century	Jeremiah Habakkuk	Early 6 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obadiah
6 th Century	Ezekiel Daniel Haggai Zechariah		
5 th Century	Ezra * Malachi Nehemiah *		

- * These are historical versus prophetic books for the most part.
- Represents prophets we've studied to date in this series.

¹ Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1976, 1978), 1985.

Introduction to Micah

Historical Setting of Book and Date – As is the case with many of the Old Testament prophets we've studied to date, little is known of the prophet Micah. However, a few facts about this man emerge from His and other's writings.

- His name is an abbreviated form of the longer name "Micaiah" which means "Who is like Yahweh?"²
- Micah was from a small town about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem near the Philistine city of Gath named Moresheth.³ Moresheth was a town in the general proximity of Isaiah's home (another 8th Century B.C. prophet) and may explain certain similarities between the prophecies of both men.⁴ For instance, compare Micah 4:1-3 with Isaiah 2:2-4. It is possible that the two prophets made use of the same source material that was in vogue during the 8th Century B.C. and the Holy Spirit inspired both of them to use it.⁵
- Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham (750-735 B.C.) – co-regent with Uzziah, Ahaz (744-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.) who were all kings of Judah.⁶
- This would have made Micah a contemporary of Hosea, Jonah and Amos who we have studied and Isaiah, who we have not yet explored.

As we have explored each of these 8th Century B.C. prophets, we have seen that the 8th Century in Israel, in particular, and Judah also, was not exactly the spiritual high point of their history. Let us summarize again some of the observations about this period that we've covered to date:

- The borders of Israel and Judah combined had been restored to an area that was almost equal to that of David and Solomon. This occurred under the political and military leadership of Jereboam II (793-753 B.C.) in the north (Israel) and Uzziah (a.k.a. Azariah – 792-740 B.C.) in the south (Judah).
- Israel's enemies were preoccupied with their own problems during this period and Israel gained control over the trade routes, thus Israel experienced great prosperity.
- Under Uzziah, Judah subdued her enemies to the west (Philistines), to the east (Ammonites), and to the south (Arab states).
- The false and syncretistic religion of the Northern Kingdom led to a disregard for the Mosaic Law as Israel lost sight of her purpose among the nations.
- The spiritual depravity combined with material prosperity led to a cruel disregard for the rights and freedoms of others in violation of the Mosaic Law.
- Amos, a sheepbreeder and fig harvester, prophesied to the Northern Kingdom during this period about impending judgment. He used the social and political oppression that was

² John A. Martin, "Micah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 1475.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Frank E. Gaebelin, general editor, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989-1998), electronic version.

⁵ Earl D. Radmacher, editor, *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1997), 1500.

⁶ Jotham (744-735 B.C.) was co-regent with Uzziah (790-739 B.C.) for several years (739-735 B.C.). Ahaz had a vice-regency under Jotham (744-735 B.C.) and later shared the throne as co-regent (735-732 B.C.). Ahaz then ruled (732-715 B.C.) with Hezekiah as vice-regent (729-715 B.C.). Manasseh was vice-regent under Hezekiah during a portion of his reign (697-686 B.C.). See Thomas L. Constable, "1 Kings," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 513.

practiced by the wealthy in Israel as evidence in the arguments and case he developed against Israel.

- Hosea warned Israel (and Judah) of impending judgment through God's agent (Assyria) and demonstrated Israel's unfaithfulness by marrying a woman who prostituted herself after their marriage.
- Micah centers his message upon the threat to both kingdoms in the form of invasion from Assyria that eventually occurred against Israel (beginning circa 730 B.C.) and culminated against Judah (circa 701 B.C.).⁷
- After Jereboam II died and his son was assassinated, political turmoil followed in the Northern Kingdom.
- Assyria began to consolidate her power and threaten Israel under the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.) and eventually besieged, destroyed and took Israel captive under Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.) and Sargon II (722-705 B.C.).⁸

Though Micah focuses some of his attention on the coming judgment and destruction of the Northern Kingdom, he also focused attention upon Judah, the Southern Kingdom. In Micah's eyes, Judah was just as guilty as Israel and they too, should be punished. In Jerusalem, the religious leaders had false confidence that they would experience no evil against them because of fact that the Temple was located in their city and the Temple was God's dwelling place – the place where His glory was manifest. Micah warned that even the Temple would not be spared in God's judgment (3:12).⁹ In Judah, Ahaz (vice-regent then co-regent with Jotham) established a pro-Assyrian policy of appeasement with Assyria that made Judah little more than a satellite of Assyria. It wasn't until Hezekiah came to the throne (circa 715 B.C.) that reforms were instituted. As the Northern Kingdom fell, some in Judah began to turn back to their true God in repentance. The repentance of a few within Judah led God to delay Judah's discipline and judgment for a little more than a century before Judah fell to the Babylonians. All the while, Assyria continued to threaten Judah under Hezekiah's reign, but when Sennacherib attempted to take Jerusalem, his efforts were thwarted.¹⁰ See 2 Kings 19:32-36; 2 Chronicles 32:21; Isaiah 37:33-37).

Micah's Style of Writing – Like Amos, Micah devotes much attention to the social injustices of the ruling classes. This growing wealthy class of Israel and even Judah's population was becoming richer at the expense of the poor with practices that were clearly a violation of and that showed a disregard for the Mosaic Covenant (e.g. 2:1-2; 3:2-3, 9-11; 5:11-12; 6:9-12; 7:3-4; cf. 6:8). Surely these practices would lead to discipline and judgment, i.e. the cycles of discipline outlined in Leviticus 26. As a matter of fact, the prevalence of references to social and religious corruption help to confirm the dating of Micah's prophetic career with the period of Ahaz's reign and the prereformation period of Hezekiah in Judah.

The book of Micah tends to be written in a poetic style, not prose. Therefore, many of Micah's statements tend to be made using parallelism – the repetition of meaning in parallel expressions.

Sometimes, as we have seen in our studies to date of OT prophets, it is difficult to see a systematic theology present in a prophet's writings. We must understand, however, that developing a systematic theology was not their purpose. Rather, their purpose was to indict the

⁷ Radmacher, *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1500.

⁸ Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, electronic version.

⁹ Radmacher, *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1500.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

nation and call it to spiritual repentance. We are almost forced to presume that the theological underpinnings for their message were understood.

Nevertheless, certain theological emphases are manifest in Micah's scroll.¹¹ **First**, Micah emphasized the sovereignty of God as He intervened in history to discipline Israel and Judah by using other nations for that purpose. In the last days of Israel's history, God's sovereign will over nations would climax (e.g. 4:11-13). **Second**, Micah emphasized the immutability of God as God would be true to the provisions of His covenant (i.e. the Mosaic Covenant as well as His promises to Abraham) with His own. **Third**, Micah emphasized the mercy of God as God was slow to discipline, but quick to forgive His repentant child (7:18-20). **Finally**, Micah emphasized the concept of the believing remnant – that spiritual group of His own who, in the end, would be exalted to prominence by means of His sovereign intervention in history to deliver them. (See Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18) It is this concept of the remnant in Micah which is connected with messianic and eschatological overtones.

Micah's scroll can be seen as a set of three messages, each of which begin with the exhortation to "hear" or to "listen" to what the Lord wanted to say to the nation. Each message also ends with some type of reference to an eschatological deliverance and restoration of the nation. The three messages are as follows:¹²

- Coming judgment followed by restoration (Micah 1:2-2:13)
- Condemnation of wicked rulers and prophets followed by the Messiah's righteous reign and judgment upon Israel's enemies (Micah 3-5)
- God pleads with His own to repent and promises forgiveness and restoration (Micah 6-7)

Micah's Purpose – The purpose of Micah should be self-evident by now. Micah ministered and prophesied in order to urge both Israel and Judah to repent and experience the deliverance that only a forgiving and merciful God could bring.

Eschatological Passages in Micah

Micah wrote about the Messiah's birthplace, lineage and origin (5:2, 4 cf. Matt 2:5-6), and reign (4:1-7).¹³ In addition, Micah referred to the Messiah as Israel's king (2:13) and ruler (5:2). As mentioned above, each of the three main messages in Micah end with a section that describes God's future, merciful deliverance and protection of His believing remnant in the last days.

- Promise of restoration of Israel and Judah (2:12-13) – end of first message
 - The Lord will regather and renew His people as their Shepherd (2:12-13a)
 - The Lord was frequently referred to in the OT as Israel's Shepherd (e.g. Psa 23:1; 77:20; 78:52; 80:1; 100:3; Isa 40:11)
 - The Shepherd is the one who "breaks open" (v. 13) and clears a way for the sheep
 - The Shepherd is their long-awaited King (v. 13b)
- The Lord's righteous reign from Jerusalem and Jerusalem's future triumph (4:1-13)
 - Gentiles will even desire to learn of the Lord (4:2)
 - The world will submit to the righteous rule of the Lord in the "last days" in contrast to Israel and Judah's present spiritual condition (4:3)
 - Security, peace and prosperity for all nations and peoples who are among the remnant will be the order of the day (4:4-5)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Martin, "Micah" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, 1475.

¹³ Micah is quoted twice in the New Testament – Matthew 2:5-6 cf. Micah 5:2 and Matthew 10:35-36 cf. Micah 7:6.

- Spiritually, Israel and Judah were lame, but the remnant from among them would be restored to the Land (4:6-7)
 - Israel and Judah's dominion would be restored to her since the Messiah would reign from her (4:8)
 - Micah predicts a captivity in Babylon with a subsequent return (4:9-10). This is an amazing prophecy since Bablylon had not yet arisen as a power and Assyria was still in a dominant position of power in the region. While Judah returned from captivity in an official sense, there was no such return of Israel from the Assyrian captivity.
 - If 4:11 refers to Micah's time, then 4:12-13 refer to a future time when the nations gathered against Jerusalem are destroyed (cf. Isa 21:10; Jer 51:33; Hos 13:3; Zech 14:3, 12-15; Rev 16:16; 19:19)
 - David was born in Bethlehem as was his ultimate descendant, Jesus (1 Sam 16:1, 18-19; 17:12 cf. Matt 2:1, 3-6).
- Israel's repentance and restoration (7:8-20)