

AN EAR TO THE HEAVENS

A man was driving along the interstate when he saw an Indian lying in the middle of the road with his ear to the pavement. He stopped to investigate. As he approached the Indian he heard him mumbling, "Large wheels, huge tires, Ford pick-up truck, color green, man driving with a large dog next to him, Alabama license plate, traveling approximately 80 miles per hour."

The man was astonished... He asked the Indian, "You mean you can tell all that by listening with your ear to the ground?" The Indian was amazed, "Listening with my ear to the ground! You gotta be kidding. That was a description of the truck that just ran over me."

Micah certainly had *his ear to the ground*, or better put, *his ear to the heavens!* He was faithful to prophesy and proclaim the warnings He had heard from God. But even if those warnings had not been uttered, the Hebrew nations should've realized the signs of the times - God's judgment was a'coming! The region had already been hit by a truck. The Assyrians were on the warpath.

Assyria began her campaign of conquest in the year 745 BC, and for the next 100 years every king east of the Euphrates River lived in mortal fear. By 732 BC the Assyrians conquered much of the land bridge linking Asia and Africa. Philistia had fallen, as had Damascus, the capital of Syria. The two Hebrew capitals would be next - Samaria, the capital of Israel, and the capital of Judah, Jerusalem.

In the mid of the 8th century BC God sent a flurry of prophets to warn His people that judgment was on the doorstep. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah trumpeted God's judgment during this crucial time. For 200 years God had tolerated idolatry in Israel and Judah, but now His patience had run out...

Judgment would come upon both kingdoms unless the people repent.

The book of Micah divides into three sections - chapters 1-2, 3-5, and 6-7.

Each section begins with the word "Hear", and follows a similar structure. There's a *condemnation* of sin - followed by a *proclamation* of judgment - and finally an *affirmation* of God's love and future restoration.

Micah 1:1 reads, "The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem."

Micah ministered from 735-700 BC. He spoke to both Hebrew nations - especially their capitals... Samaria and Jerusalem. Like Amos, Micah was also a country boy sent to the big city to confront kings and priests.

His hometown, Moresheth, was a farming village 25 miles southeast of Jerusalem. Micah's goal was to *weed out sin, and reap a harvest of souls.*

MICAH'S THEME

The meaning of the name "Micah" is also the theme of His message. "Micah" means "Who is like Jehovah?". This is the issue that preoccupies the prophet. His intent is to vindicate the Lord's character. He wants to prove God's goodness and greatness. No one is like the Lord.

On the one hand, God is pure and holy, and would not be true to His name or nature if He did not judge sin. On the other hand, God is kind, loving, and forgiving - and if His people will repent, God will be merciful towards them. *No one is like the Lord.* He is without peer in the fierceness of His wrath, *and* the lavishness of His love. Cross Him, and you'll feel an unparalleled anger. Embrace the cross of Jesus, and you'll know His incomparable love.

RED CARPET TREATMENT

Micah 1:3, "For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place." Here's a version of "rolling out the red carpet" like none we've ever witnessed. The Lord descends to judge His people, and natural catastrophes follow.

Revelation 16:20 tells us that prior to the second coming of Jesus, God will also judge the earth with cataclysmic upheavals. John writes, "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Micah is like most Old Testament prophets. His prophecies have a two-fold fulfillment. He addresses an immediate, local situation, but the immediate foreshadows events that will take place at the end of the age. His prophecies are contemporary and future. Micah sees the Lord coming to bring judgment on Israel and Judah, but what He sees also foreshadows the day when God will descend to judge all the earth.

"Micah" means "Who is like Jehovah?" - It's the name of the prophet, and the theme of the book.

A MICAH-COSM OF GOD'S HEART

In the midst of the indictments against God's people it's interesting to note Micah's attitude. Does he stand there with folded arms and an "I told you so" expression on his face? Is he cruel and self-righteous? Does he take joy in the judgment of others? The answer is *No!*

Micah cries out in verse 8, "Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches..."

In his commentary Walter Kaiser writes, "Micah is not a dispassionate observer, steeled against the terrors he predicts. Instead, he is so torn apart by the grief that was to come that he wails like a banshee and howls like a

jackal as he goes about naked in a state of deep despair." Micah was *torn up* over the fact God's people were about to be *torn apart*. If we had heard Micah's teaching on tape we would have assumed he was the chief mourner at a funeral.

In the ancient world when times got *tough* a prophet would appear in the *buff*. Nakedness was a sign of mourning. God revealed to Micah the *bare facts*, the *naked truth* - he knew the people had sinned and would be judged.

In essence, Micah was a microcosm of God's heart. Call him a *Micahcosm*. God is never pleased to bring judgment. It grieves Him deeply. He'd rather forgive and bless. God mourns for His people in the same way Micah did.

Devotion Box - The God Who Breaks Open

I love the name God gives Himself in verse 13, "the One who breaks open".

Put God in a box, and He'll break it open. Try to limit, or restrict Him, and He'll break all restraints. When you encounter a personal bondage remember "*the One who breaks open*" lives in your heart. He'll shatter the chains that hold you down.

JESUS: HIS BIRTH AND BEGINNING

Micah 5:2 reads, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Micah foresees the coming of the deliverer Himself. 730 years before the fact, Micah predicts the exact location of Jesus birthplace.

In Matthew 2:5 when the wise men arrived in Jerusalem asking the whereabouts of the Messiah, the chief-priests and scribes searched the Scriptures, and found this verse, Micah 5:2. They too, realized it spoke of Messiah's birthplace.

"*Bethlehem, Ephrathah*" is the equivalent of saying, "*Atlanta, Georgia*". Bethlehem was the city. Ephrathah was the larger region or district.

Notice, Micah is amazed that such a small and insignificant city would be the one chosen by God to host Messiah's birth. This is why each Christmas we sing, "O, little town of Bethlehem." As cities go, she was "little among

thousands". God chose humble beginnings for the child who was "the One to be Ruler in Israel".

But that's not the end of the prophecy. Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, but *His birth* is not *His beginning*. Verse 2 adds, "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." The word translated "*everlasting*" means "*from eternity on*" - it's an immeasurable duration. Buzz Lightyear would put it, "to infinity and beyond."

Jamison, Faucett, and Brown says the term conveys "the strongest assertion of an infinite duration - of which the Hebrew language is capable of making."

The term literally means "*beyond the vanishing point*". It's the point at which time fades into eternity. The horizon of time. Before time began there was Jesus. Go back as far as your mind will allow, and there stands Jesus Christ.

The *Ancient of Days* and the *Babe of Bethlehem* are one and the same. He's the Alpha and Omega. He has no beginning or end of days. Jesus is the eternal God.

Devotion Box - How To Please God

In Micah 6:6-8. *How can I live in a way that pleases the Lord?* "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

It reminds us of what Samuel said to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." Never try to replace obedience with sacrifice. Giving God what we think

we can afford is no substitute for giving Him what He requires.

And here's God's requirements - they're surprisingly simple - *do justly, love mercy, walk humbly*. Here's another way to express it: Work for what's right. Never be satisfied with the excuse, *that's just the way it is*. Don't wait for folks to deserve your love before you give it out. Forgive freely and eagerly. And always keep a low profile. Work for what's right - be eager to forgive - and let God have the glory.

"do justly", *fairness* - "love mercy", *forgiveness* - "walk humbly", *faithfulness*. Make these your three goals in life, and you'll live a life pleasing to God.

WHO IS A GOD LIKE YOU?

Remember the name “Micah” means “*Who is like Jehovah?*”. God’s character and nature have been the prophet’s underlying theme throughout the book, but in verse 18, he comes right out and asks the question, “Who is a God like You?” And what is it that sets God apart from the rest of creation? This is such good news – this is the reason I get out of bed every morning – this is what makes me love the Lord more every day - *it’s God’s willingness to pardon sin.*

“He delights in mercy.” He’ll “subdue (or help us conquer) our iniquities”. Even after we fall and fail, “He will again have compassion on us”.

And check out verse 19, “You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” And notice He says “all our sins” – not just some sins... not only the civilized sin, but the barbaric sins – not just the bashful sins, but the bold and brash sins – not just the accidental sins, but the intentional sins – Guys, “all” means “all”.

God forgives us fully and freely. He wipes our slate clean, so no one can accuse us. He casts all our sins into the deeper part of the ocean – they’re gone forever – and just for good measure He posts a no-fishing sign on the shore. What a God we serve! *Who is like Jehovah?*

Devotion Box - Confidence In God

In 7:8-10, Micah shares his confidence in the Lord. “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.” His enemies want to bury Micah under a mound of condemnation. Yes, he’s stumbled and sinned, but the Lord will plead his case. God will help him rise again, and vindicate His faith and trust in the eyes of His enemies.

Guys, we have an enemy. Revelation 12:10 refers to Satan as “the accuser of the brethren”. He wants to bury you and I under a mountain of condemnation. But Jesus pleads our case. And because I trust in Him - though I fall, yet I too will rise!

PUNS AND PUNISHMENT

In the last half of Micah 1, the prophet predicts God’s judgment on 12 cities of Judah. Most of the 12 were within a 10 mile radius of Micah’s hometown, Moresheth.

One detail to note, Micah was one of the most articulate and graphic of the prophets. Here, to capture his readers’ attention he uses a series of word plays, and puns, and alliterations. *Micah uses the pun to predict God’s punishment.*

For example, Verse 10, “*Gath*” means “*to announce*”. Micah says, “Announce it not, in to announce.” “*Beth Aphrah*” means “*house of dust*”. In essence he’s says, “Those who live in the house of dust, will be rolled in dust.” Look too in verse 11, “*Zaanan*” means “*Go out*”. Micah says, “The inhabitants

of go out will stay in.”

I played with this a bit, and came up with some personal parallels. If I were Micah, and was called to warn my surrounding cities, I’d say, “A gust of wind will level Augusta. All is not well in Roswell. Look at the sins in Athens. Snellville ain’t far from Hellsville. Judgment is headed to Buckhead. Lilburn better turn or burn. Norcross needs the cross. Suwanee will sing its swan song. Duluth has rejected the truth. Monroe has got to go... Stone Mountain has taken God for granite.”

You get the point. This is what Micah does with his one line verdicts. He uses puns to forecast punishment.

N A H U M

On the morning of June 6, 1944, 3500 Allied ships surprised the Germans occupying France. The battle that followed turned out to be the decisive conflict of World War 2. The D-Day invasion was the beginning of the end for Hitler’s Third Reich. With a beachhead at Normandy, the Allies went on to liberate Europe.

Over the years people have assumed that D-Day stood for “*Decision Day*” or “*Disembarkment Day*”. Officially the name D-Day only meant “*D-Day*”, but it turned out to be a “*Dooms Day*” for the Germans. The book of Nahum describes another D-Day – a battle that altered the ancient world to the degree that the invasion of Normandy altered the modern world. We could call it “*Assyria’s Dooms Day*”.

Nahum is an ancient war correspondent, and his prophecy predicts Babylon’s invasion of the ancient city of Nineveh, the capitol of the Assyrian empire. Remember 100 years earlier God sent a reluctant prophet named *Jonah* to Nineveh with a message of judgment. The Ninevites repented, producing one of the greatest spiritual awakenings of all time. The revival though was short lived. Within a few generations the people reverted back to their idolatrous ways. Now Nahum is sent with a similar message.

Remember, Assyria and the Ninevites were brutal. Babylon would represent man’s assault on God. Assyria symbolized man’s assault on his fellow man. The Assyrians skinned their captives alive, and used the flesh as wallpaper. They buried folks alive inside the walls of their buildings. They liked to tie a person to the ground and drive a stake through his gut just to watch him squirm in pain. They led defeated kings around on dog collars, and made them live in kennels. They enjoyed humiliating and torturing their captives. They were a bloody and barbaric, ruthless and heartless people.

The lesson God teaches Nineveh is that He cares not only about how we treat Him, but how we treat each other. Mistreat your fellow man, and you’ll anger God. Humans are made in His image, thus *a crime against man is a sin against God.*

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - June 17, 2001 - CC Christian School (Grades K5-5th) is registering students for the 2001-2002 school year...Monday, June 18th-22nd *Middle School Youth retreat @ St. Simons Island*....Saturday, June 23rd *Motorcycle Day Trip to North Georgia* - contact Tom or Deborah Pressley for more info...Tuesday, June 26th *Terrific Tuesday* (grades 1-5) - sign up at the Info Counter...Friday, June 29th *Men of the Cross* - join us for dinner, good fellowship and Bible study... Monday, July 2nd 6:30 PM *Middle School Youth Monday Night Live!*....Monday, July 16th - 19th *Kid's Camp at FDR State Park* (grades 1-5) Join us on an adventure to KINGDOM SAFARI, where Jesus is King! Cost is \$80 per camper, \$40 deposit required. Sign up today at the Info Counter!

Next Bible Scan - June 24 - Habakkuk 1-3, Zephaniah 1-3

"You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." - Micah 7:19

Bible Scan Memory Verse

THE PRECISION OF PROPHECY

Nahum 2:6 tells us how the fortress of Nineveh would be conquered. "The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved." Verse 8 reads, "Nineveh of old was like a pool of water, now they flee away." A river helped defeat Nineveh.

The Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, who lived around 20 BC, wrote that the fall of Nineveh was due to abnormal flooding of the Tigris River. Two tributaries of the Tigris flowed under the city walls, and when the river swelled over its banks the floods washed out a 2½ mile stretch of the wall, creating a gaping hole. Nineveh suddenly became easy pickings for the invading Babylonians. Earlier in chapter 1:8, Nahum also predicted, "with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place..." It's amazing that 20 years beforehand, God predicted through His prophet Nahum, the precise means by which He would conquer Nineveh.

Nahum 3:19 sums up God's judgment on Nineveh, "Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?" Here's an excerpt from the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Ancient History, "The disappearance of the Assyrian people will always remain a unique and striking phenomena of ancient history. Other, similar kingdoms and empires have indeed passed away, but the people lived on... With the Assyrians a nation which had existed 2000 years, and had ruled a wide area, lost its independent character." The historian marvels, but it was God's work. He predicted it in advance through His prophet, Nahum.

Only an eternal God dwelling outside time and space can tell us the end of a matter from the beginning! The prophecies of the Bible are more evidence for the divine inspiration of Scripture.

THE CAUSE OF CRUELTY

Nahum 3:1, "Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs." Nineveh's cruelty was the crime that sealed her judgment.

I read of an 18 year old gang member in Milwaukee who murdered a 15 year old girl. At his arrest he was reported as saying, "This is going to wreck my whole summer. I'm not going to be able to go to Summer Fest. It's not like she was the president or anything. She was just a girl." When a society no longer believes that men and women are made in the image of God, when they reject the sanctity of human life, that society will grow increasingly cruel and violent.

The rash of school shootings in our country are another example of the growing violence and disregard for human life. It happened in ancient Nineveh, and it's happening again in modern America.

SLOW TO ANGER

Nahum 1:3, "The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit (or free) the wicked." In other words, God is amazingly patient. His wrath amasses slowly. He gives us time to repent, but don't mistake His patience for approval or apathy. The wicked will be judged. They won't get off the hook.

It reminds me of William Silva, age 44. Silva was recently arrested in San Jose, California on a burglary charge. It was Mr. Silva's 550th arrest. His *rap sheet* fills 127 feet of computer paper. But what about you and me? How long is our *sin sheet*? How many times have we been arrested by the Holy Spirit?

God is patient. He tolerated Assyria's sin for 100 years. They were given a century-long pardon. But there comes a point when His patience runs out.