

Book of Micah

Title:

The name of the book is derived from the prophet, who having received the word of the Lord, was commissioned to proclaim it.

Micah, whose name is shared by others in the Old Testament, (e.g. Judges 17:1; 2 Chron. 13:2; Jer. 36:11), is a shortened form of Micaiah (or Michaiah) and means “Who is like the Lord?”

In 7:18, Micah uses a play on his own name, saying “Who is a God like You”

Author – Date: The first verse establishes Micah as the author.

Beyond that, little is known about him.

His parentage is not given, but his name suggests a godly heritage.

The author of this prophecy is identified as “Micah the Morasthite.”

He was a native of Moresheth-gath in Judah where he prophesied against his own city (1:14), which probably did not help his popularity with the local population.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah.

Apparently Micah died in peace in the days of good King Hezekiah (Jer. 26:16-19).

Much of Micah’s prophecy is very severe in tone, though it does contain much poetic beauty similar to that of Isaiah.

In many ways the Book of Micah is a “sister-book” to Isaiah.

It has been called “Isaiah in shorthand.”

The purpose of Micah’s prophecy is to face the people with their sins and to seek the word of God’s judgment that must fall because of their persistent sinning.

The author completes the purpose of his book by ending each discourse with a word about restoration.

The author pictures the restoration in two phases:

(1) Immediately, after the Babylonian captivity, and

(2) Ultimately, at the Millennium.

Micah places his prophecy during the reigns of Jotham (750 – 731 B.C.), Ahaz (731 – 715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715 – 686 B.C.).

His indictments of social injustices and religious corruption renew the theme of Amos (mid-eighth century B.C.), and his contemporaries, Hosea in the north (ca. 755-710 B.C.); and in the south, Isaiah (ca. 739-690).

This fits that which is known about the character of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:10-18), and his son Hezekiah prior to his sweeping spiritual reforms (2 Chron. chapter 29; 31:1).

His references to the imminent fall of Samaria (1:6), clearly position him (before 722 B.C., at approximately 735-710 B.C.).

Historical - Setting:

The exact location from which the prophecy originated is not known.

Though the burden of the prophecy is concerned primarily with the northern kingdom and the northern towns of Judah, the prophet conducted much of his ministry in Jerusalem.

The prophecy likely originated there in the latter half of the eighth century B.C.

The most outstanding single prophecy concerns the preexistence and human birth of the Messiah at Bethlehem (5:2).

This amazing prophecy affords a wonderful demonstration of the accuracy and certainty of the fulfillment of all the prophecies in this and all the other books of prophecy.

Just as this prophecy was fulfilled in complete detail by the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem Ephratah” (5:2), so minutely will all the other prophecies of this book be fulfilled, that is, the destruction of Israel and Judah by Assyria and Babylon and the ultimate regathering of Israel for the millennium.

With its references to the millennial kingdom, the book offers another proof of a premillennial understanding of Scripture, and demonstrates once again the sovereignty of God who is working out His plan through such an irresponsible people as Israel.

His plan will not be thwarted.

The reign of King Ahaz, one of the most wicked kings of all of Judah’s history is in the background of much of Micah’s prophecy.

The dark picture presented by Micah's prophecy may reflect the reign of King Ahaz, while the brighter aspects of Micah's prophecy reflect the godly rule under King Hezekiah.

Background - Setting:

Because the northern kingdom was about to fall to Assyria during Micah's ministry (in 722 B.C.), Micah dates his message with the mention of Judean kings only.

While Israel was an occasional recipient of his words (1:5-7), his primary attention was directed toward the southern kingdom in which he lived.

The economic prosperity and the absence of international crises which marked the days of Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.), during which the borders of Judah and Israel rivaled those of David and Solomon (2 Kings 14:23-27), were slipping away.

Syria and Israel invaded Judah, taking the wicked Ahaz temporarily captive (2 Chron. 28:5-16; Isa. 7:1-2).

After Assyria had overthrown Syria and Israel, the good king Hezekiah withdrew his allegiance to Assyria, causing Sennacherib to besiege Jerusalem (in 701 B.C.; 2 Kings chapters 18 and 19; 2 Chron. Chapter 32).

The Lord then sent His angel to deliver Judah (2 Chron. 32:21).

Hezekiah was used by God to lead Judah back to true worship.

After the prosperous reign of Uzziah (who died in 739 B.C.), his son Jotham continued the same policies, but failed to remove the centers of idolatry.

Outward prosperity was only a facade masking rampant social corruption and religious syncretism.

Worship of the Canaanite fertility god Baal was increasingly integrated with the Old Testament sacrificial system, reaching epidemic proportions under the reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:1-4).

When Samaria fell, thousands of refugees swarmed into Judah, bringing their religious syncretism with them.

But while Micah (like Hosea), addressed this issue, it was the disintegration of personal and social values to which he delivered his most stinging rebukes and stern warnings (e.g., 7:5-6).

Assyria was the dominant power and a constant threat to Judah, so Micah's prediction that Babylon, then under Assyrian rule, would conquer Judah (4:10), seemed remote.

Thus, as the prophet Amos was to Israel, Micah was to Judah.

Historical – Theological Themes:

Primarily, Micah proclaimed a message of judgment to a people persistently pursuing evil.

Similar to other prophets (Hosea 4:1; Amos 3:1), Micah presented his message in lawsuit/courtroom terminology (1:2; 6:2).

The prophecy is arranged in 3 oracles or cycles, each beginning with the admonition to “hear” (1:2; 3:1; 6:1).

Within each oracle, he moves from doom to hope, doom because they have broken God’s law given at Sinai; hope because of God’s unchanging covenant with their forefathers (7:20).

One third of the book targets the sins of his people; and another third looks at the punishment of God to come; and another third promises hope for the faithful after the judgment.

Thus, the theme of the inevitability of divine judgment for sin is coupled together with God’s immutable commitment to His covenant promises.

The combination of God’s:

- (1) Absolute consistency in judging sin; and
- (2) Unbending commitment to His covenant through the remnant of His people provides the hearers with a clear disclosure of the character of the Sovereign of the universe.

Through divine intervention, He will bring about both judgment on sinners and blessing on those who repent.

The theme of the prophecy is sin, judgment and restoration.

This can be seen by the fact that the book consists of three discourses, each of which sets forth:

- (1) The people’s sin;
- (2) God’s judgment; and
- (3) God’s ultimate restoration of His sinning people.