

BIBLE STUDIES // TERM 3 // 2022

Micah

BIBLE STUDIES

Rev. Sib.

Study leaders:

In this series, we are once again using what's called '[The Swedish Method](#)'¹ as a basic framework for letting the text speak. The key question is: "What is God saying to His people *today*, as we encounter Him in word and Spirit?"

I have offered some thoughts at the beginning of each study, but this is only to prompt your own thinking.

The two key disciplines for leading these studies well are 1) knowing the text yourself, and 2) getting a feel for how much to let people 'have their head.' It can be easy for a study to run off on a tangent when there is not a strict form to follow. However, one powerful question you can always ask is, "Where do you see that in the text?" Or, "What was it about what Micah wrote here that brought that up?" These are helpful questions to ask, because while sometimes it will bring your group back from a tangent, other times it will turn out that it is not a tangent at all - - indeed, rich new horizons in your own understanding of the text may open up before you!

So please enter into this series with a sense of *adventure*, looking to where the Spirit may take you and your group in your ongoing journey of discipleship, both in mind and in deed.

By way of users' notes:

In this series, each passage includes the "**Preached on...**" date. This is not to say that you have to wait for the sermon, nor fully depend upon the

¹ <http://thebriefing.com.au/2009/01/the-swedish-method/>

preacher's own work. However, reflecting on the sermon may be an aid to you in your own preparation, or it may help to expand your thinking on a passage. Our preachers are men and women who have 'studied to show themselves approved workers' (2 Tim. 2:15). Yet it remains true that they, like us, are fellow disciples—learning to discern the face and voice of God in the text: at times perceiving 'in part, as in a mirror' (1 Cor. 13:12). So please use the sermons as a resource, even as you yourselves 'search the scriptures, to see if these things are so' (Acts 17:11).

Notes on Micah

In 2022 during the second part of Term 3, we are taking the time to look at the 8th Century prophet, Micah.

Reading and applying the Old Testament is a little different to applying the New Testament. In the New Testament we find letters which directly address the context of the disciples, and even the early church: including us Gentiles. Much of this content can be picked up and applied directly to our lives with little qualification.

But when we come to the Old Testament, we encounter a *massive* culture gap. This isn't like going back to the 1800s and trying to understand why whale oil is such an integral part of their lives, or why hawsers and warps were so important in shipping. (*If you had to Google that, that's the point.*)

When we read an 8th Century (BC) prophet like Micah, we are diving back more than two and a half millennia. Multiply the 1800s culture gap tenfold, and that's where we find ourselves. It is a very different context and the religious practices of the day are vastly different to our own. Animal sacrifice was a regular and expected part of their religious life. Ceremonial laws regarding washing, or clothing, or Sabbath, were given to demonstrate God's holiness. And because these were part of the law that bound Israel, breaking these laws was as much a sin as breaking the law that said, *you shall not murder, you shall not steal.*

We have to remember that Micah spoke into a different context. And yet, it is not so different. God is still holy. His people were called to be holy, as are we (1 Pe. 1:15-16). And although Christians are free from the Old Testament covenant and its' ceremonial laws (see Rom. 10:4, Gal. 3:23-25, Eph. 2:15), God still cares for the widow, the poor and the outcast, and he will still avenge the injustice which is done in this world (see, well, the entire book of Revelation).

So as we read Micah, let's take note of what God values, of what he wants for his people, and let's think about how we—as a redeemed people in

Christ—can live in light of what we learn about God’s character and God’s values in this book.

To understand the background and the broad sweep of Micah, it would be really worthwhile watching *The Bible Project’s* overview video on Micah, found on YouTube.

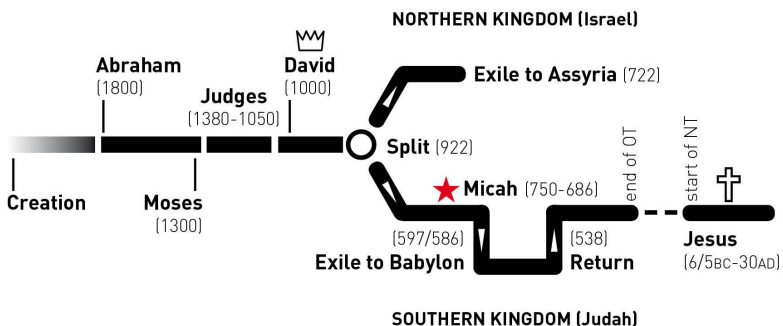
You can also find a number of helpful *Visual Unit* infographics on Micah available online at: visualunit.me/tag/micah/, for those who find graphical representations helpful. (*Visual Unit is actually a great resource to bookmark for bible study in general.*)

It is particularly helpful to remember the divided history of Israel and Judah (see 1 Kings 12:1-20), and how both Assyria and Babylon were used by God to bring judgement upon His people. The book of Micah anticipates both acts of judgement: God’s wrath will fall upon Samaria, but will reach “even unto the gates of Jerusalem” (1:9, 1:12).

Most importantly, despite the warning of judgement, we must remember that Micah ultimately paints a horizon of hope. In Micah 5, we hear of a King who will be born in Bethlehem, and whose greatness will reach to the very ends of the earth.

...I’m sure you’ve heard of him!

Sib.



The Swedish Bible-Study Method



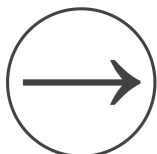
A **'light bulb'** is anything that 'shines through' in the passage. What stood out when you read it? What struck you? What grabbed your attention? It could be an idea, a literary device, a fact... Anything!



A **'question mark'** is anything that puzzles you, or raises a question for you (however basic or simple). It is extra important to ask how this might connect to the rest of the Bible. You might not have all the answers yourself, but as the group pools their resources, you may get closer to an answer together!



The **'cross'** is asking how this passage relates to Jesus. Where is Jesus in this passage? How does this passage help us understand his nature, his work, or his purpose? How does this passage help you to know Jesus more?



The **'arrow'** is asking, 'so what?' This is where we think about what preachers call 'application.' How might this change my life? One prompt is S.P.E.C.K.: is there a Sin to avoid, a Promise to know, an Example to follow, a Command to obey, or new Knowledge of God or ourself? The arrow asks, "What difference will this make to you?"

Ideally, in running the Swedish method, you will allow a time for the group to read the passage, and to reflect on it. Members might individually jot down some thoughts next to the icons in the study. When it comes time to share, you then initiate the discussion by asking, "So what were some of the things people noticed?" The study will flow on from there, as you work through the categories.

Finish by praying that we will be changed by what we learn. Pray that we would not be like one who looks in a mirror, and then walks away, immediately forgetting what he looks like (James 1:24). Pray that we might see the face and hear the voice of God in the text, and that we might be changed by it.

Preached Sept. 4 ^(8/10) and 11 ^(8:30/6pm)

The End of Injustice

Micah 1, Deuteronomy 6:1-19, *NT* Romans 2:5-11

This first chapter of Micah paints a vivid picture of God visiting the land of Samaria and Judah in judgement.² The full picture of God's judgement and the people's sin will be unfolded throughout the whole book of Micah.

This chapter makes it clear that sin has reached a level where God himself must deal with it personally.

In verse 2, God calls himself as the chief witness. Then in the following verses, God approaches the land like an apocalyptic warrior. Judgement comes upon the people for their great sinfulness. Micah reacts with weeping and wailing, perhaps for the intensity of the judgement he foresees, but also because of the wretched state of those being judged. We see alliances fall apart, and ancient scores being settled, because of the coming judgement of God.

But *why* is He so angry with Samaria and Judah? It's like we've walked into a household in the middle of an argument, without knowing the backstory. If we keep on reading Micah, we will come to understand more fully.

It is interesting to think that when the Lord *does* come to visit his people, the fulfilment of this prophecy looks... *perhaps a little different* to the picture Micah paints. Compare especially **Matthew 21:1-9**. And yet as we read through to Revelation, we see that there will indeed be a day of justice: not just for Israel and Judah, but for all.

² 'Samaria' refers to the Northern Kingdom, *Israel*; as opposed to the Southern Kingdom, *Judah*.

Read Micah 1.



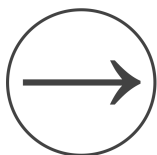
What shines out?



What raises questions?



How is Christ revealed?



What difference
will it make?

Preached September 11 (8/10) and 18 (8:30/6pm)

A Psalm for the Homeless

Micah 2, NT 1 Peter 5:6-11 (8am Gospel, Matthew 21:1-9)

This chapter paints a striking picture. The sin that it identifies is that of taking someone else's place - - their home, or their fields. It reminds us of incidents like the time when the wicked duo Jezebel and Ahab murdered Naboth and seized his family's vineyard in **1 Kings 21**.

God warns in verse 5 that those who deprive others of their homes (their 'place') will lose *their* place in the assembly of the righteous. It is a stark warning to those who would profiteer off what should rightly belong to others: who 'strip the robe of those passing by' (v. 8) or who 'drive women from their homes' (v. 9).

This chapter surely has a lot to say to us as investors and as citizens. If we, by our actions, cause others to become displaced and homeless, God is *not* pleased.

But notice how the chapter ends. God himself (as shepherd) will guide his people back to pasture, and become their King once more. Ultimately, those who are deprived of their place; defrauded or driven from their homes, will find themselves welcomed by God: He will be their shepherd, He will be their King.

Read Micah 2



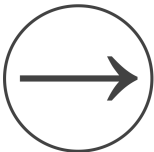
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Preached September 18 ^(8/10) and 25 ^(8:30/6pm)

A Promise of Justice

Micah 3, *NT* 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (8am Gospel, Matthew 5:19-24)

In this chapter, God compares the wickedness of Israel's leaders with the act of cannibalism. It is *utterly* shocking. It is a very severe warning. Sin is abhorrent to God. But what is the sin that is addressed in this chapter?

It looks as though the sin that is at the heart of chapter 3 is that of building up Jerusalem in their own strength and for their own ends. We see that everyone is *'in it for what they can get out of it.'* Judges take bribes, priests do their job for the silver, and prophets are hardly any better than the pagan fortune-tellers who are only in it to make a buck.

God warns that this kind of self-serving, *'in it for what I can get out of it'*—behaviour will ultimately gain them nothing but contempt from Him. He warns that it is this very behaviour that will result in His judgement falling upon the land. It is a *stark* warning to all of us who have any kind of power in our lives. We must walk in the fear of the Lord, rather than being *'in it for what we can get out of it.'*

Read Micah 3



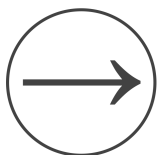
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Preached September 25 ^(8/10) and October 2 ^(8:30/6pm)

A Place for the Broken

Micah 4, *NT* James 5:1-11

Despite the grave warnings that sin would bring destruction and ruin upon the land, this chapter comforts the faithful with the promise that this will not last 'forever.' The ruin of the temple won't be permanent. In fact, one day God is going to exalt His temple. He is going to fill it with his presence, and He will fill the city with the remnant of His people.

It must have been beyond awful for faithful believers to witness the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem. The fact that *everybody* suffered—whether they were righteous or not—must have seemed confusing, or even unjust. But this chapter has the answer to what seems unjust at first: God will make it right. His temple will be lifted up. It will bring peace to all the earth. Nobody will be afraid because God Himself will gather those who suffered in the judgement (4:6).

The fulfilment of this promise is quite amazing. Jesus described Himself as "the Temple," which will be exalted on the third day - in His resurrection (John 2:18-22)!

Verses 8-13 look to the future hope of Israel and the nations. Israel will be conquered and exiled, but God *will* redeem His people from their exile. The king, born in Bethlehem, will rule over the restored people of God.

Read Micah 4



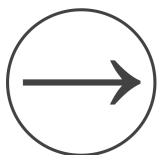
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Preached October 2 ^(8/10) and 9 ^(8:30/6pm)

A Prince of Peace

Micah 5, Gospel Matthew 2:1-12 ^(8am NT, Ephesians 2:11-16)

This chapter is one of the most striking chapters of prophecy found in the Old Testament. In verse 2, we read that God will raise up a ruler from Bethlehem; one who brings security from the enemies that surround God's people. This king will bring so many blessings - - it is worth taking the time to read over them and to think about what this will mean for us.

But not only is the king himself a blessing; we also see that God's people will themselves become a blessing that blesses the nations. At the same time, God will bring His final justice and remove evil from the world. This is an incredible chapter.

Read Micah 5



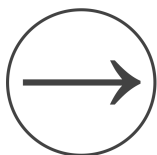
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Preached October 9 ^(8/10) and 16 ^(8:30/6pm)

A Plea for Justice

Micah 6, NT Romans 12:9-21 (8am Gospel, Mark 7:5-15)

This chapter is amazing. When we think about how we approach God, it is easy to imagine that it takes all kinds of outward religious displays. But in this chapter, Micah asks: *With what shall I come before the Lord?* And the famous answer is that it is *not* about putting on a big outward show. It is about how we behave towards “the least of these.”

God tells his people what it will mean to do justice, and calls them to consider *His* justice, which threatens those who practice injustice. We return to the pattern of warning followed by hope, which runs throughout the book of Micah. Micah again exposes the unjust economic practices of Israel’s leaders, and how it’s destroying the land and its people.

Read Micah 6



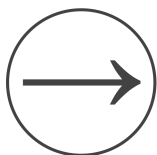
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Preached October 16 ^(8/10) and 23 ^(8:30/6pm)

A Horizon of Hope

Micah 7, NT 1 Peter 1:13-25 ^(8am Gospel, Luke 6:17-26)

As Micah sits with his prophecy—one which straddles the line between judgement and hope—this chapter strikes a sombre chord. It's as though Micah feels like the host, left cleaning up after the party has ended... There's nothing for him, and no one left who cares.

And yet he is so confident that God will come and be the deliverer, the one who does what is good and who brings blessing. It is a wonderful hope. Compare with **Jeremiah 26:12-19** where we see that Micah's ministry brought great blessing—even in his aloneness. So will ours, as we submit ourselves to God in faith and hope. *Amen?*

Read Micah 7



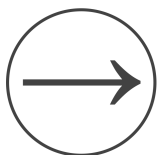
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Our Prayer Points

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