

Micah

by Graham Jones - The Church at Gun Hill

Micah chapter 1

Introduction (v. 1)

Micah was speaking in uncertain times, during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. It must have been a roller-coaster experience. Jotham was a good king and **“became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord His God.”** (II Chronicles 27 v 6) However, by his reign the rot had set in nationally for **“the people did yet corruptly.”** (II Chron. 27 v 2) After Jotham, the nation plunged into darkness again as Ahaz followed the ungodly, idolatrous ways of the kings of Israel in the north. He made images to the false gods or Baalim, burnt his children to heathen deities and sacrificed to the gods of Damascus. Then, like a breath of heavenly air, Hezekiah’s godly reign arrived, but by then it was too late for the nation to avoid God’s judgment.

Micah Saw the Word of the Lord (vv. 2 to 9)

As Micah observed the political situation, the advancing activities of the powerful and cruel Assyrian armies, he could see by revelation that God was behind the growing threat of invasion. God was moving in certain judgment upon His people for all their sins and iniquities. He visualised the cataclysmic events that would follow as the wrath of God was poured out upon the wicked, both then and, for him, in the far distant future. Every high place, lifted up in pride and defiance against Him would be brought low. The molten lava pouring forth from the mountains, the earth torn apart by earthquakes, all sure signs that God would be punishing the sins of His people, just as a similar fiery ordeal made Sodom and Gomorrah **“an example unto those that after should live ungodly.”** (II Peter 2 v 6)

And can we not see by the revelation that the Word of God gives, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the political movements in the world around us and the growing fear of cataclysmic upheavals caused by man’s treatment of the environment, also presage the coming judgment of God? Do we also not wonder how evil and iniquity can abound and increase much more without the judgment of God? Surely it is coming.

Two things are cited as the cause of the judgment and two names are given as the responsible parties. Both names were the names of the same person in the history of the nation of God’s people. Jacob, the cheat and supplanter, was the name of the old, self-reliant man; Israel, a prince with God, was his new name. But in both, iniquity was found. Samaria, with all the idolatry and Baal-worship brought in at an earlier stage by Jezebel, was the transgression of godless Jacob, whilst the high-places had found their way into the very heart of God’s people Israel, in Jerusalem itself. No wonder Ezekiel could tell the story of two daughters, Aholah and Aholibah in Ezekiel 23 vv 1 ff. The Lord says concerning them **“they were Mine”** (v.4) Aholah, in her idolatry and advances towards the Assyrians, was portrayed as a harlot. The same Assyrians turned on her and slew her. Aholah was Samaria. Despite the clear judgment carried out on her sister, Aholibah (which was Jerusalem) did not learn from the lesson, but became much more corrupt and sought after the ungodly ways of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. If judgment came upon Samaria (Aholah), it must certainly fall upon Jerusalem (Aholibah).

When God’s judgment comes it is thorough; it leaves nothing that has not been dealt with. It discovers the foundations (v.6), the very source and support of the ongoing sin and transgressions. Does the world today not see that its increasing grasp on and promotion of ungodliness and immorality, deliberately flying in the face of God’s commands and direction, will eventually lead to its downfall and destruction by that same blaspheming world when God’s judgment falls. Then there will be no pride, no defiance, merely a

desperate and vain calling to the **“mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.’”** (Revelation 6 v 16) Those who gathered the hire of the harlot shall themselves become the hire of a harlot (v. 7), as they are captured, taken away and destroyed by the very system they got pleasure from. The pleasures of sin are but for a season (Hebrews 11 v 25); in the end, the wages of sin are death. (Romans 6 v 23) With no sign of repentance or turning, just as in our own world today, Micah could only mourn concerning his people that **“her wound is incurable.”** With every opportunity to repent passed by, with God’s goodness spurned, all hope seems to have gone. Judgment and destruction are inevitable.

What’s in a Name? (vv. 10 to 12)

As Micah looks over the land and sees the Word of God coming into reality, it seems as though the very names of its towns and cities describe the current conditions. So distressing is the downfall of God’s people that he cries out, **“Declare it not at Gath, weep ye not at all.”** (v10) Immediately, this calls to mind David’s grieving cry on hearing of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. **“The beauty of Israel is slain... how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.”** (II Samuel 1 v 20) Judgment must not give the enemy a chance to think that he has got the upper hand. Gath was at the very heart of an ancient enemy’s territory. It had been the home of Goliath who rose against and intimidated the people of God and in open defiance against the Lord. Gath means “treading”, that is, as in the winepress – a symbol of God’s wrath. (Revelation 14 v 19) The enemy is a mere tool in the hand of God; he has nothing and should not be given anything to glory in. The Lord God has made it known that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (Ezekiel 33 v 11)

As Micah looks around, he sees Beth-le-Aphrah, the House of Dust. True repentance and godly sorrow, demonstrated by rolling in the dust seems the only appropriate action left to this sinful people. Certainly, there is no beauty to glory in – **“the beauty of Israel is slain.”** Sapphir means “beautiful”, but all that is left to them is the shame of their nakedness. For a future condition, the Lord warned complacent Laodicea that if they did not avail themselves of the Lord’s provision, the shame of their nakedness would appear. (Revelation 3 v. 18) All will be revealed and open in that day; nothing will be covered up.

The inhabitants of Zanaan, a name referring to the flocks coming out to pasture, would not come out, because in the house of their neighbour, Beth-ezel there was only mourning. In the time of judgment there is nowhere to hide.

And there will be no point in looking for help from elsewhere. Judgment must be faced alone. The inhabitant of Maroth (bitter), might be looking for good to come, but what chance do they have in their bitter state of mind against God, when the judgment (the evil) will come from God right down to the very gate of Jerusalem, the city of peace and the city of righteousness. If judgment must begin at the house of God,... what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? (I Peter 4 v 17)

The End is at Hand. What Shall We Do? (vv.13 to 16)

Is this the end for Judah? The people themselves could not believe it. Micah’s prophecy would be very unpopular because it seemed so final. Later, when Jeremiah was prophesying at the time judgment actually descended in the form of the armies from Babylon, Micah’s unpopular message was quoted. King Hezekiah, at that earlier time, had obviously listened and acted appropriately. (Jeremiah 26 vv. 18,19)

Lachish was one of the cities of Judah that fell to the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah, but God delivered Jerusalem at that time. Lachish was undoubtedly involved in trade with Egypt for horses and chariots, a trade which King Solomon had started. (I Kings 10 vv. 28,29) How the Lord had warned of seeking help from Egypt and of trusting in horses and chariots! **“Bind the chariots to the swift beast,”** calls the prophet. But what help can there be from the enemy? It was this dealing with Egypt and the northern

Kingdom of Israel that had introduced sin into the lives of the people of God, the daughter of Zion. What you value as dear and precious, the things of the world, Moresheth-gath, "possession of Gath", you will say good-bye to, for the presents are parting presents. The world offers nothing that will last. And if the people were to think that they had any defence in what they had built up, then they were deceived. 'The houses of Achzib' literally means the houses of a lie or deceit. In times of future judgment people will believe "the lie" rather than hold to the truth. (II Thessalonians 2 v 11).

Nevertheless, there is hope, even in desperate times. The children may go into captivity as judgment falls, but the Lord says that He will bring an heir to them, one who will conquer. Those that inhabit the chief, or elevated place, will be displaced when the "occupier" or heir comes in the time of judgement. But the glory of Israel will come to Adullam. Adullam is that place of the cave, where David, anointed to be the next king, fled to and had his base while Saul pursued after and sought to destroy him. It was a place of rejection, yet he was the true heir to the throne. The Lord will be in the place where His people are. Who else can the glory of Israel refer to than the Lord Himself, the coming Messiah? Micah is the prophet who tells us of the Saviour's coming. He tells us where He will be born – not in the magnificence of a palace in Jerusalem, but with nowhere to lay His head in little, insignificant Bethlehem. (Micah 5 v 2) When, in the fulness of time, He did come, He was despised and rejected of men (Isaiah 53). In this great time of darkness and judgment, God still remembers mercy. If we may do what we are encouraged not to do when reading a book, that is, take a peek at the last page, we will find glorious hope:

*"Who is a pardoning God like unto Thee, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy."
(Micah 7 v 18)*

Hallelujah!

Micah chapter 2

The Power of Covetousness (vv. 1 and 2)

Following the revelation that the judgment of the Lord was coming soon, Micah begins to show how the influence of idolatry had corrupted people at their very heart, particularly those in authority. They covet fields and houses. That all important tenth commandment does indeed reveal human inability to keep the law. Paul, though he could claim that he was blameless before the law (Philippians 3 v 6), was condemned by the last commandment (Romans 7 vv 7 to 11).

And it is right here that we find the appeal of Baalism and the worship of other gods. It catered for human greed and self-promotion. No wonder Jesus warned, **“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.”** (Luke 12 v 15) Yet, consumed by this covetous spirit, those with authority and power used violence and oppression to gain possession of property that was the inheritance of others. It was contrary to God’s law for a person’s inheritance to be sold permanently or for it to pass from tribe to tribe. If property were sold in time of financial difficulty, then it would return to the proper heir in the fiftieth year of Jubilee. (Numbers 36 v 9; Leviticus 25 vv 8 to 17)

This was the very spirit which had ruined Ahab through the advice of his evil wife Jezebel. He coveted Naboth’s vineyard, offered him money for it and then sulked when Naboth pointed out that it was contrary to God’s law. Jezebel mocked Ahab for not using his authority as king to get his own way. Through her counsel Naboth was falsely accused, executed and his property transferred to the king. It was the ruin of Ahab and the people of Israel. (I Kings 21) However, it also infected the kingdom of Judah in the south. Back in the royal line of the kings of Judah there had been intermarriage. King Jehoram had married Ahab’s daughter, Athaliah (I Kings 18 v 8), who became the mother of the next king, Ahaziah. When he was killed, Athaliah seized power and reigned for six years. Little wonder then, generations later, that king Ahaz, during whose reign Micah prophesied, **“walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and made also molten images for Baalim.”** (II Chronicles 28 v 2) Little wonder also that the corruption had spread throughout the nation’s leaders.

How sad it is today to see that same spirit of covetousness and self-promotion dominating the lives of people in our own society and to witness the unjust ways in which the rich increase in riches at the expense of the poor and needy. Such covetousness and greed controls their lives. When normal people enjoy restful sleep, they lie awake plotting their next move and cannot wait until morning business starts to put their plans into action. They are obsessed by it to the point where they are blind to moral considerations. They do it because they can (“it is in the power of their hand” v1). Are we surprised to find the same state of affairs today even in our own ‘civilised’ country – politicians and businessmen taking advantage of expense accounts, not declaring gifts, using their positions to get lucrative non-executive posts, highly paid speaking engagements and so on. The evil in it is this: at the bottom end of the scale is the oppression of so many needy people. It is a corruption that, in the end, can only bring ruination. They do it because they can. How sad when we witness that same spirit in those who bear the name of Christ!

The Lord is in Control (vv. 3 to 5)

The Lord has been aware of all this and warns that the evil that is coming, in the form of invading armies from Babylon, will, in fact, be His judgment upon them. Note that the Lord does not own them as His people but refers to them as “this family.” There would be no escape from the approaching captivity; the yoke would be on their necks. All pride would be gone.

Further, these warnings of certain judgment anticipate another judgment yet to come in the last days, when Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies and at the point of defeat.

When judgment comes the cry of lament will rise, **“We be utterly spoiled”** (v4). Those who had stolen from others, will themselves be robbed. Similarly at the end, when that great and worldly commercial system of Babylon collapses, the rich merchants and who had traded in so many things, including the souls of men, will weep and wail at their great loss. (Revelation 8 vv 7-10) Micah showed the great distress as people realise that God has changed the portion of His people, dividing their fields, gained by violence and oppression, to the enemy.

The worrying feature of the people’s response to the judgment is that they are concerned only for their great loss. There is no sign of grief for their sinful actions and certainly not a hint of repentance. Do we not live in similar times where people sadly seem no longer to be aware that sin is at the root of so many of the ills in our society?

Anger Against God’s Word (vv. 6 to 11)

In fact, the anger of this people is directed against all prophets and the Word of the Lord. If the Word of God is silenced, then there will be no shame and no repentance. We know the phenomenon only too well. When Christians declare the revealed will of God in so many different moral areas these days in terms of medical ethics, sexual morality and so on, so often they are branded as mindless fanatics and bigots. Yet all around us are the shocking consequences of the immorality. How many more problems do we have to reap, before we realise that sin brings ruin.

“Don’t prophesy!” they call. They are not interested in what God has to say, yet any that ignore God’s Word do so at their peril.

God’s reply shows that the people have become alienated from Him in their hearts. They bear the name of the house of Jacob, but they are far from Jacob’s God. Their religion is only nominal; there is no heart experience of the Lord. How many today are only nominal Christians? They bear the name, but have never repented and put their faith in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; they have never been born again of God’s Spirit. They do not believe that with God all things are possible.

Yet God has been warning His people of impending judgment. Their reply is just like the words we hear today. God is love; God is forgiving. How could He possibly move in such a way? How can these works of judgment be His doings? Only to the upright are these words a comfort, the thought that the wicked will not always prosper.

And so the people who bear the name of Jacob continue to behave like the enemy, even now, even yesterday (of late). There is no compassion in their actions. Contrary to God’s law they rip the clothes from people’s backs, they drive the widows from their homes. In so doing they deprive the next generation of that godly way of life which manifested and revealed the grace and goodness of God – **“from their children have you taken away my glory forever .”** (v.9) Oh what damage that spirit of covetousness can do: promoting self, ruining the lives of so many others, separating from God, bringing into opposition to God’s Word and spoiling the testimony of the goodness of God.

God Remembers Mercy (vv.12 and 13)

God exhorts His people to depart. The land is no longer fit to be their inheritance; it has been polluted and will be the ruination of any who stay. Judgment has to come to rid the land of the sin and corruption that it has descended to. The ear of the people is only inclined to hear what they, in their covetousness, want to hear. They want the prophet who will promise wine and strong drink; they want to promote self-indulgence. That would be a disaster and so judgment, in the form of the Babylonian armies, had to come.

It is a wonderful principle in the Scripture that God loses nothing. In judgment God always remembers mercy. Here, God makes a promise that He will gather together His people, "Jacob, all of you." Although we can see a partial fulfilment of that from the time of Cyrus onwards when a return of the Jews to the land of Israel began, yet there has not yet been a complete fulfilment. There is yet coming a time when all Israel will be restored to the land, not just the Jews. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones was a vision of the "whole house of Israel" being restored to the land and to spiritual life. (Ezekiel 37) The remnant that Micah foresees is not just a few whom God manages to salvage from this mess. No! ***"They shall make a great noise by reason of the multitude of men."*** That latter day return and gathering together of Israel has already begun. In 1948, Israel again appeared as a sovereign state.

Zechariah (chapter 14) prophesied that, at the end Jerusalem would be surrounded by the nations, at the point of utter defeat. Then the Lord will come, their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to deliver them and gather them to Himself. Who else could this be? ***"Their King shall pass before them and the Lord at the head of them."***

Despite the awful prospect of coming judgment, an idea which the worldly do not want to hear, yet it has to come. But out of it, in the end, God will have a people who are wholly His – ransomed, healed, restored and forgiven. Who like them His praise shall sing?

Micah chapter 3

Power Corrupts

There is a problem with positions, offices and titles. They can create a feeling of superiority. People love titles and high office because they appeal to their vanity. Worse, there is always the temptation to use position for selfish ends, despite the misery it might cause for others. Such was the case among the people of God in the time of Micah. Corruption and ungodly ways had spread from the top down. Such can sometimes be the case today in the church. Titles and position can inflate egos; they love to be called pastor, apostle, reverend, very reverend and so on. What is important is not the title you have but the ministry that you are fulfilling. Ministry is not imposing your will on others but service. Jesus said that if you want to be great in the Kingdom of God then you must serve; if you want to be the greatest then you must become as a slave (Matthew 20 vv 26,27). The Pharisees loved to wear religiously distinctive clothing and to be greeted by flattering titles such as "Rabbi". But Jesus warned against the use of titles like 'Teacher' and 'Master'; He reminded His disciples that they were all brethren (Matthew 23 v 18). If church has developed into a hierarchical structure, have we forgotten that?

Micah's comments in this chapter are directed at the leaders and rulers of the nation, and at the prophets and priests.

Leaders and Justice (vv1 to 4)

The leaders and princes of the nation had power and authority to administer the law and justice. We expect of such that the best interests of all are served. Everyone deserves to be treated equally and fairly. But for some leaders, and we can think of a few in the news at the moment, such positions of authority give them the power to act in their own interests and for their own personal gain, no matter what suffering and grief might be caused in the process. They have no time for moral considerations. Just as the leaders in Micah's day, they hated the good and loved evil. In fact, we find the same attitudes at all levels in our own society. Generally people seem to despise those that do good but proclaim their own bad actions as if they were something to boast about and be proud of. No society can survive long if that attitude prevails and becomes predominant.

As far as God is concerned, those who are responsible for His people must not "lord it over them" (1 Peter 5 v 3). Ministry is about service. The rulers in Micah's day were full of their own self-importance and indulged themselves at the expense of the poor and needy. They stripped them of everything they had. The imagery used shows how exacting it was. They tore the skin and flesh from their victims' bodies; they broke their bones and chopped them up for the cauldron. It reminds me of how we used to get everything we could from the Christmas turkey: roast turkey on Christmas day; cold turkey on Boxing Day; turkey sandwiches after that; then there was turkey stew and turkey soup. Nothing was left, but the bones. That was a picture of the extent to which these leaders used their position to extort everything possible from others.

Micah reminded them, as we remind people today, that there will be a time of accounting. In that time of judgment, just as they refused to listen to their victims' cries for justice, so their cries will not be heard. It will be too late. Those who expect to be shown mercy must themselves be merciful.

May we never see the people whom we serve as being simply the means to achieving our own selfish ends or achieving better status for ourselves. They are not just a statistic to improve our own church attendance records in order to boost our standing in the eyes of others.

Prophets and Revelation (vv 5 to 8)

Prophets have a powerful hold on the minds of people. The man who has a revelation from God and who declares “The Lord is telling you ...” has great influence. None of the Lord’s people wants to disobey God. However, how do you know whether the message is from God or just something that the prophet wants? It is an old problem and one which people in Pentecostal churches are well aware of.

Deuteronomy gives two clear guidelines: if what you are told leads you away from God or, if what you are told does not happen, then it is not from Him (Deuteronomy 13 vv 1ff. and 18 v 22). In the New Testament, in I Corinthians 14 v 29, Paul gives good advice that discerning judgment must be exercised in these matters.

These prophets of old led the people astray. John warned, **“Dear children, don’t let anyone lead you down the wrong path. Those who do what is right are holy, just as Christ is holy. Those who do what is sinful belong to the devil.”** (I John 3 vv 7,8 – NIRV). Micah accused them of biting with the teeth. Strong’s Concordance explains that the Hebrew word conveys the idea of “biting with a sting” – like a snake’s bite, it is venomous. But Strong also points out that the term was used in an idiomatic way to signify lending money at a high rate of interest. This is something which God’s people were forbidden to do. Exploiting people in a time of poverty or need to extort “usury” was strongly prohibited in the law (Deuteronomy 32 v 19). Yet these prophets used their position as “God’s voice” to persuade people otherwise.

If you provided for the prophets (by feeding them), then they would prophesy peace for you. If you did not, then the word prepared for you would be war and disaster. This is clearly wrong but there are many still who try to control people by false claims of private revelations.

Micah declared to them that God would deal with them so that their fraud would be clearly seen by all. Darkness would surround them. Everyone would know that they had no answer from God. They would be thoroughly shamed. Amongst God’s people they would be as repulsive as the leper who had to cover his upper lip and cry out, “Unclean, unclean!” (Leviticus 13 v 45) Then they would be the outcasts. People today must realise that there is coming a day when they must give account, when all secrets will be made known.

By comparison, Micah was a true prophet, full of the Holy Spirit and not afraid to announce the message of judgment, to tell people, whoever they were, that they had sinned, even though it was not popular. (v 8)

Money – a Root of All Evils (vv 9 to 11)

To acquire money, the rulers perverted the course of justice. Their decisions were guided by the amount of the bribes they received. They had built Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. The priests taught for hire and the prophets divined, that is, told people’s fortunes, for money. The whole system had become corrupt and there was no truth in it. Well did Paul warn Timothy that the love of money is a root of all evils. (I Timothy 6 v 10)

We must consider the message well for today. Things in churches, evangelistic and even Pentecostal churches, have changed so much over the last thirty to forty years. Now we receive invitations to meetings where we have to pay to get in. It began with Christian concerts but has now gone on to meetings where the Word of God is being preached. Are we going to start charging the unsaved to come and hear the Gospel being preached next? What concerns some people is that this has been accompanied over the years with reports of certain evangelists who have amassed a fortune as a result of their method of financing. Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians, did not even want them to take a collection; he told them to be faithful in their regular giving so that last minute appeals would be unnecessary and the gospel could be proclaimed without charge (I Corinthians 16 vv 1 and 2). Money

has been the downfall of many who started off with intentions of serving the Lord. Be careful! It is on the increase: admission charges, fees for teaching or preaching or conducting seminars and conventions, begging letters, appeals promising a reward of a hundredfold more and so on.

The Final Prophecy (v 12)

Micah prophesied what for the Jews was unthinkable. These false leaders, priests and prophets thought that it did not matter what they did; they thought Jerusalem and the temple were always secure, because God had promised He would be there forever. They felt they could impose on His grace and thus "lean on the Lord". They thought that because God was with them in the Temple, no trouble would ever afflict them. How wrong! God gives grace and gives more grace, but He does not give us grace to continue in sin.

Micah prophesied that the day was coming when Zion would be like a ploughed field, Jerusalem would be a heap of rubble and the temple mount would be overgrown with trees. It was unthinkable. Therefore it was not widely received. But so important was it that when Jeremiah was prophesying the same things in the days in which the prophecy was about to be fulfilled, the people remembered, word for word, what Micah had prophesied over a hundred years before. (Jeremiah 26 v 18)

In the end sin was punished and dealt with. Let us seek to serve one another. Let each esteem other better than himself (Philippians 2 v 3). Let us seek to bless and edify others with the ministries that God has given us.

Micah chapter 4

Micah has been emphasising the impending judgment. He had warned God's people of the folly of assuming that they were untouchable and of presuming that the Lord was among them simply because they had the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. Micah prophesied what to them was unthinkable. The time would come when Zion would be like a ploughed field, Jerusalem like piles of rubbish and the mountain of the house of God overgrown with a forest of trees. So chapter 3 ended with such scenes of desolation.

In the Last Days (vv 1 to 5)

However, with chapter 4 comes fresh hope: here is presented a glorious vision of the future, a time when God's purposes for His people and, indeed, for all nations would be accomplished – in the last days. Despite the coming judgments, eventually the future for God's people will be glorious. It is absolutely certain; God's promise stands sure. This is especially the case, because there is a twofold witness to this particular promise. Micah's contemporary, Isaiah, prophesied in almost the same words, in [Isaiah 2 vv 2 to 4](#):

“And it shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Beyond the years of captivity, exile and dispersion among the nations of the world, Israel, the people of God, may be assured that God's promises will never fail. Israel will be gathered together again in the land of promise, the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem and from there the Lord will reign supreme in an era of peace and fruitfulness. This will all be fulfilled in the millennial reign of Christ when Jesus will have returned to the earth and been accepted as the true Messiah. That the temple will be rebuilt and the details of its construction were revealed later, after the foretold judgments had come upon the land, at the end of the book of Ezekiel.

We must rest assured that God's promises to His people Israel have not failed. There has been no cancellation of the promises, neither have they been transferred in a spiritual way to be applied to the Church. No! The Church has its own place and promises. God does not change. God does not lie. In the last days, God will resume His dealings with His earthly people who, for two thousand years have, as it were, been set aside. The church will be snatched away, “raptured”, to meet Jesus in the air ([1 Thessalonians 4 v 17](#)). Then, following a seven year period of **“The Great Tribulation”** ([Matthew 24 v 21](#); [Revelation 7 v 14](#)), Daniel's seventieth week ([Daniel 9 v 27](#)), when Israel will be surrounded on all sides by the nations of the world, and at the point of utter defeat, Jesus will return, and all His saints with Him, to defeat the enemies and establish His kingdom on earth ([Zechariah 14 vv 1 to 9](#)). And He will reign for a thousand years ([Revelation 20](#)).

This is the time of which Micah speaks. Satan also will have been bound for a thousand years ([Revelation 20](#)) and the nations of the world will have to look to the Lord for guidance and judgment. The Lord will teach them His ways and they will walk in His paths. What a change from today when, all over the world people are forsaking God's ways for their own, when our own government is stubbornly ignoring the voice of morality to press down a pathway of destroying human life, creating genetic confusion, rejecting the God ordained and natural family structure of husband and wife, mother and father and when

even some “church” leaders seem to be supporting them. The nation will reap the consequences but the government will never admit that the increasing problems and disasters are the results of their actions. So, for instance, they will proclaim, with an endless supply of ready statistics, that the unprecedented spread of sexually transmitted diseases and increase in under-age pregnancies has no correlation whatsoever with their foolish attitudes to sex education, provision of contraceptives, liberal counselling and so on. Yet the greater their input into sex education, the worse the problem gets... the worst in Europe.

They fail to see that rejection of Biblical attitudes to the correct and loving disciplining of children has produced a generation of spoilt youngsters, many of whom have no respect for authority and little or no regard for anyone else. The “no-smacking” brigade always maintains that physical punishment never achieves anything. Of course, they always try to distort the proper and reasonable application of such discipline into angry aggression, violent loss of temper and abuse. That is to distract attention from the right course. They never seem to realise the folly of what they are saying. Since the advent of their “we-know-better-now” policies, the behaviour of an increasing number of children and young people has become a matter of national concern. It is their attitude that does not work and that has, in fact, landed us in the current mess.

When, in the last days, the Lord will come to clear up the mess, He will show the right way: the way of peace when weapons are turned into farming tools; the way of fruitfulness, plenty and prosperity when all shall rest under their own vine and fig tree enjoying the rewards of their own efforts; the way of blessing when there will be no fear of violence and oppression. What a perfect society that will be!

Jerusalem will be the centre of the Lord’s sovereign rule. It, and the house of the Lord, will be exalted above the mountains and hills. Huge geographical changes will take place at the Lord’s second coming, as described in [Zechariah 14](#). The Mount of Olives will be split in two creating a valley from east to west. That Jerusalem itself will be lifted up in the upheaval is indicated by the fact that living waters will flow out and down from the city towards the Mediterranean Sea and in the opposite direction towards the Dead Sea. God is righteous. All His promises are sure and steadfast. Israel, the people of God, and the Temple in Jerusalem, will be the centre of government and blessing for all nations. Whatever the nations of the world might choose, the people of God can proclaim, **“We will walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”** (v. 5)

In That Day (vv 6 to 7)

At this time God will fulfil all the promises made to His people from Abraham onwards. As the result of their idolatry and disobedience the people have suffered down through the centuries as God has chastised and disciplined them. They have “halted” or “limped” between two opinions, between the Lord and the Baalim. That was the challenge of Elijah on Mount Carmel ([1 Kings 18 v 21](#)). They had been weakened and driven out of the land of promise in successive waves from the Assyrian attacks on the north, the Babylonian enforced exile and then following the catastrophic war with Rome (66 – 70 AD). But none of this was because God had forgotten His people or been unable to deliver them. Neither had God cast them off altogether. In fact, it was God Who had afflicted them.

Jacob too had limped (halted) after a man (the Lord) had wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. He touched the hollow of his thigh and Jacob was never the same, self-reliant, arrogant man again ([Genesis 32](#)). And in that day, the day of Messiah’s reign, the lame will be the remnant upon whom all God’s promises of the land and blessing will come. They will no longer rely on themselves and their own works, but they will lean on God. The remnant will not be some weak, desperate scrap salvaged from the wreckage of what was Israel. No! For those which had been cast off will become a strong nation over whom the Lord will reign from Mount Zion forever. God’s promises are sure. In that day, this shall be their song:

***“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of you: you shall not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack. The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing...
...At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, says the Lord.”***
(Zephaniah 3 vv 14 to 20)

The Kingdom Will Come to All Israel (v 8)

Everything falls into place when God’s people return. When Jacob, who is also Israel, returned to the land of promise from serving his uncle Laban, God told him to go back to Bethel where He had first encountered the Lord. Because of that tremendous first meeting, Jacob had called the place Bethel, “House of God”. In preparation for returning to that hallowed place, Jacob instructed his household to put away the strange gods that were among them, to be clean and to change their garments. When they journeyed on from there, the terror of God fell upon the cities that were round about them. (Genesis 35 v 1 & 2) Such will be the case when a repentant Israel turns with all its heart to the Lord in the future.

Jacob journeyed on. Rachel died in childbirth, just by Bethlehem. As she died, she called the name of her son Benoni (son of my sorrow); Jacob, however, called him Benjamin (son of my right hand). It was here that Jesus was born, the Father’s well-beloved Son, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. However, in the fulness of time, He suffered and died for our sins, rose again and is now exalted, the Son of the Father’s right hand. Jacob travelled on and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edah. (Genesis 3 v 21) The tower of Edah is the tower of the flock. Set at the extremity of the possessions of Jacob at that time, it was a stronghold to keep an eye on the activities of any enemy; yet Jacob went deep into enemy territory to extend his possessions and influence. God’s people today are in a spiritual warfare to drive back the powers of darkness and to extend God’s Kingdom here on earth. And Micah declares to God’s returning people of the last days that their influence will go far beyond any earlier territory. They will come to this same place of return – the tower of the flock (or, the Tower of Edah), the stronghold of the daughter of Zion. It will come to the first dominion, or, in other words, to the original set-up of the twelve tribes of Israel. The return to the promised land, and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom will not be just by and for the Jewish people, but by and for the whole house of Israel. When Ezekiel had the vision of the valley of the dry bones, it was a revelation of the restoration of an apparently hopelessly separated, lost and even dead nation to a living, victorious army of God’s people. And God showed that this was the whole house of Israel. The New Testament confirms that all Israel shall be saved – that is every tribe represented. (Romans 11 v 26)

Meanwhile Back to the Present Scene (vv 9 to 13)

God has revealed His mercy and His faithfulness. He has shown how every promise will be fulfilled. Nevertheless, before that time comes, there is much to be endured. The confidence of the people has been in their own strength and in their own king. They had desired a king like the nations to rule over them when the Lord their God was their King. They had had their desired kings – proud, stubborn, self-seeking, and rebellious against the ways of the Lord – and now they were facing the consequences.

God, in a Divine and righteous way, taunts these people who had wanted a king like the nations rather than Himself. Why are they crying out loud? Have they not got a king to deliver them? Have their advisers perished? Their troubles now are like the pains of a woman in labour. Yet in that very thought there is hope. Out of labour pains comes a new life and all the joy and blessing associated with it. God warns the people through Micah of the future invasion of the Babylonians, but this prophetic word is delivered when the Assyrians were the dominant and terrifying world rulers. It would be a painful time,

which we from our vantage point in the 21st century can verify actually came to pass. But it would be from that painful time that the Lord would redeem His people to be His forever. Out of the pains of being defeated, exiled, driven out and scattered throughout the nations, God would redeem His people. A new nation will be born in a day. In that day it will be seen that God's promises never fail.

However, before that day eventually dawns, many nations will rise up against Israel to seek to destroy them. In 1948 Israel again emerged on the world stage as an independent nation. Since that time the nation has suffered repeated attacks from the surrounding countries, many of whom have avowed their desire to wipe Israel off the map. This is all a prelude to the final assault upon the nation which will take place at the end of the seven year Tribulation period. Zechariah, in chapter 14 vv 2 and 3, describes what will happen:

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.”

The remainder of the verses depicts the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and all the saints with Him. He it is Who will defeat the enemies of His people. The nations did not know that this was all in the Lord's plan when they attacked Israel; that He was drawing them on to their own destruction at the hands of the very people they sought to destroy. Yes, God's people, as always and according to His exceeding great and precious promises, will always have the victory over every foe.

The promises of the Lord are perfect. In every respect they are and shall always be fulfilled. The cry of God's people through the ages, today and in the future is, ***“There has not failed one word of all His good promise.”*** (1 Kings 8 v 56) God's people will rejoice in victory and Jesus, the promised Messiah and Deliverer, will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.