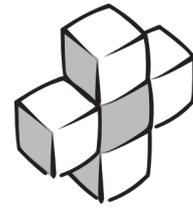




SMACC

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ



Bible Study Series:

Micah



Our Mission:

To glorify God together in response to his grace

by making disciples of Jesus Christ

About These Studies

These studies were written by various SMACC leaders for use among young working adults and university students. You are most welcome to use and adapt these studies for your own context. Where you do so please provide the following acknowledgment.

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Study 1: “Destruction is Coming” (Micah 1)

Getting started

1. When was the last time someone was upset with you about the wrong that you had done against them? How did you respond?

(Point: Do we repent when we do wrong?)

Context

2. When did the word of the Lord come to Micah? What was it concerning?

*1:1, in the days of Jotham, Ahaz & Hezekiah, concerning Samaria & Jerusalem
Simple question to get people talking.*

3. Read 2 Chronicles 27:1-6, 28:1-5, and 29:1-10. What were the three Kings like?

- **Jotham** – Did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, rich, won battles, built cities, prosperous, but in v3 ppl still followed corrupt practices.
- **Ahaz** – Did not do what was right, made metal images, offerings, defeat.
- **Hezekiah** – did what was right, opened the doors & consecrate the house of the Lord, wants to make a covenant with the Lord.
- A feel of what was it like during the days of Micah, what would it be like to be an Israelite during that period. In this timeline, it is important to note that Israel has already split into North & South, Israel and Judah, and that the northern kingdom fell during this period. This is before the fall and exile of the southern kingdom.

Digging in

4. Who is Micah speaking to in verses 2-5? What does Micah call them to do? What does he say about God?

Answer: all people on earth. This is important to point out so that when we look at the specific judgments that are coming upon Israel, we must know that this judgment applies for all people/nations today.

He calls them to “hear”. The lord is a) witnessing against you (v2) , b) coming out of his place (v3-4). The “hear” part is important as it marks the different segments of repeated patterns in Micah. By the way, the pattern is judgement by God and reasons for it followed by a message of hope. This is repeated three times in Micah (1:1, 3:1 and 6:1). He says this about God: God isn’t happy and is about to judge them

5. What does the imagery in vv3-4 represent?

Answer: God’s judgment on all the earth but specifically on Israel and Judah, using them as an example of his ultimate judgment on all people.

**It is very important to point out that Micah starts out his prophecy by addressing all the nations (‘peoples’). The judgment that is coming upon Samaria is for all the people of the earth to take note of – God’s judgment against idolatry and social oppression will come upon all those involved.*

6. Why is God angry? What is he going to do?

Transgression of Jacob / sins of the house of Israel (v5). Destroy Samaria, carved images & idols. (v7).

7. What do you think were the transgressions / sins of the house of Israel? Do you think it is fair for God to destroy Samaria?

This is a question where opinions are welcome. You could spend a few minutes here getting people to talk. Likely answers: because of the Israelites unfaithfulness, idols, disobedience of Kings. Likely correct, but we will truly see why in chapter 2 where it is brought down to a much more ground level. Good for them to remember what sort of answers they gave. The second part might be a little more tricky

8. What is the response of Micah?

Micah basically laments and pronounces doom and gloom on the towns in Judah. The Bible seems to use a lot of wordplay and symbolism as even the names of the towns have meanings.

It's important to note Micah's response of lament upon understanding God's judgment. His lament and call to lament are an important note for us on how we should feel about the impending judgment that is coming upon the earth – our family, friends, relatives, enemies etc.

Application

9. Do you think there is any reason for God to feel the same way today as how he felt at the time when Micah wrote his prophecy?

**This question helps us to reflect on the state of the world, and also the church.*

Name meanings

- Gath = tell
- Beth-le-aphrah = house of dust
- Shaphir = beautiful
- Zaanan = come out
- Beth-ezel = house of taking away
- Maroth = bitter
- Lachish = to the steeds
- Moresheth-gath = one who is betrothed
- Achzib = deception
- Mareshah = conqueror
- Adullam = symbolic of hostility, David's exile in 2 Sam 23:13

10. How would you feel if you were told God is against you and about to execute judgement of you and your friends and family? How would you respond?

Note to leaders: Follow up question – We know that there will be a day of judgment (Rev 20:11-15). Considering this, what should we be doing in our school/job?

11. What would you say to a friend who says, "God loves me; therefore, I can live however I want to live?"

Study 2: “God Judges Mercifully” (Micah 2)

Big Idea: God will judge wicked men, including His own people; but He will show grace/mercy to a remnant still.

Getting Started

1. Imagine your government is unfair, abusing its power and oppressing people; even the police and politicians are corrupted and unethical. What hope do you have in this terrible injustice?

Context

Last session we looked at:

- a) God’s anger towards Israel’s idolatry and unfaithfulness
- b) God will judge all of the earth

Digging In

2. Read Micah 2 and divide the passage into smaller sections, each with a short title.

Verses	Title
<i>1-5</i>	<i>God judges His sinful people</i>
<i>6-7</i>	<i>God’s people rejected His prophet</i>
<i>8-11</i>	<i>God’s people rejected Him</i>
<i>12-13</i>	<i>A remnant of God’s people saved</i>

Read Micah 2:1-5

3. Who are “those” in verse 1 and what have they done? What is the extent of their depravity?
 - *Wicked leaders who abuse their power. They do evil because they have the authority and ability to carry out their schemes.*
 - *Sin is already bad even when we didn't have intentions to commit it. But these leaders who are supposed to be taking care of the people God entrusted to them did the opposite - they premeditated (purposely and intentionally) a scheme to rob His people and used their powers to do what they wished. Micah used the word “morning” to further emphasize the depths of the depravity.*
 - *Courts in the ancient world normally start in the morning but here we see instead of doing justice and upholding righteousness they do the direct opposite; do injustice towards their God’s people by taking not of: covet, seize, take, oppress and to do it in broad daylight shows disregard towards God and hatred for the people whom they were supposed to look after.*

4. In verse 2, what does the “inheritance” signify?

- *In the theological sense, to inherit means to "receive an irrevocable gift" with an emphasis on the special relationship between the benefactor and the recipients. Unlike legal inheritance, the benefactor, God, does not die, yet he provides material and spiritual blessings for his people.*
- *The focus of the inheritance concept in the Old Testament is God's promise to Abraham. The land of Canaan was bequeathed to him and his descendants as an eternal possession (Gen 12:7). Each family in Israel was apportioned its own inheritance as an inalienable possession (Josh13-31) and given the task to occupy the land (Judges 1:3). As the biblical history of Israel unfolds, the promised inheritance specifies a righteous remnant who will inherit the world as an everlasting possession (Psalm 2:8 ; Isa 54:3 ; Dan 7:14).*

5. What are the consequences of the evil deeds of “those” people? Do you think God overreacted?

- *Their community is accountable for the sins of its leaders; important: although it is sn of a few, but the impact they brought because of their wickedness, the entire land and everything in it is cursed, became unclean. However, later we see how God still saves a remnant from His people. God saves His people from His people because of the Shepherd-King, Jesus.*
- *There is no escape from God's judgement (disaster; cannot remove your necks- ESV)*
- *God will humble them (no longer walk haughtily)*
- *The apostates (Assyrians?) will seize their land and they will be mocked for their losses.*
- *The dishonest land-grabbers are excluded from the inheritance they denied to others/ God will banish them from the land He provided.*

6. What does “portion” in verse 4 signify?

- *Inheritance*
- *Land (OT); Salvation (NT)*

Read Micah 2:6-7

7. What is the perception of God to those whom asked Micah not to preach?

- *They thought: God is good to them, disgrace will not overtake them; He is gracious, He will not grow impatient towards them as they think they are people of God (house of Jacob), thus it is impossible that God will bring destruction/curse them. The other perspective we can see is through the lens of Romans 1:25; they exchange a truth (that God will judge as mentioned in the Torah) for a lie (God is okay with them sinning or they act as if there is no God)*
- *They do not like when Micah preaches things like God will bring destruction to them because of their transgressions & wickedness. In contrast, they are only fond of listening to things that tickle their ears, like God is love (Exodus 34:7)... The whole truth is that God will both keep His covenantal promises to Israel as a nation; and that he does good only to him whose ways are upright. Next, they misapplied texts (Pr. 26:9; Lk 4:10-11). False teachers today apply the doctrine of the believer's security to those who disown their Lord and do not bring forth the fruit of repentance from sin (cf Mt. 7:24-27; 12:50; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:12). Paul*

in the NT again mentions this problem when sinners want to hear what they want to hear at the expense of the truth: 2 Tim 4:3.

- *They silence a man that tells the truth, in God's name -- Micah.*

8. Do you think that the Lord has grown impatient (In Hebrews: Has the spirit of the Lord grown short)? Why?

- *Yes of course. The people thought that a God of grace could never bring the disaster mentioned in vs 3-5.*
- *When God loses patience, it's when He executes judgement; He will no longer show mercy, He will destroy those who repeatedly rejected Him.*

Read Micah 2:8-11

9. In verse 10, why is it that "this is no place to rest"? (cf. Deut. 28:9-11; 15-16)

- *This is no place of rest because they were not sitting under God's authority but the authority of false prophets.*
- *These false prophets propagated uncleanness that polluted the land*
- *Sin brings ultimate destruction*

10. Read Jeremiah 5:12-13, what does it mean to "utter wind and lies"? Why does the people choose the preacher who utter "wind and lies"?

- *The people welcomed "preaching" that emphasized overindulgence. They did not want to hear that they were violating God's standards.*

Read Micah 2:12-13

11. Notice the words "assemble", "gather", "set", "like sheep" in verse 12. What do they portray?

- *They portray Yahweh as a protective shepherd.*
- *Israel's Shepherd-King will gather His sheep into a protected area (v12) and then deliver them (v13).*
- *The first part of Micah 2 has the opposite imagery: sins (covet, seize, take, oppress) causes destruction (land is cursed and taken away) and God judge those wicked people. But here, the chosen people of God are gather, led and cared for; they are joyful (noisy multitude of men); God Himself will lead them to the land of rest -- Salvation.*

12. Read Isaiah 52:12 and John 10:2-4. Who will be the one who protects and leads the remnant of Israel, from uncleanness to holiness?

- *Cf. 2 Kings 19: 31*
- *The Lord would not only bring them from captivity, and multiply them, but the Lord Jesus would open their way to God, by taking upon him the nature of man, and by the work of his Spirit in*

their hearts, breaking the fetters of Satan. Thus he has gone before, and the people follow, breaking (with his strength) through the enemies that would stop their way to salvation.

- *The release from Jerusalem occurs in 3 stages: Israel's Shepherd-King goes up and breaks open the blockaded gate; the masses break out and pass through the opened bay; and their King takes His rightful position at their head. Israel's earthly King failed; her heavenly King will triumph.*

Application

13. The prophet Micah speaks to people who rejected his message. Do we speak God's message to others faithfully?

14. We see that in Micah 2 that God is a just God. We also see how he will execute judgement on the leaders who transgressed. How are we similar to the leaders and how should we respond to God when we know that even though He is a God of grace, He is also a God of justice who will judge all sins?

- *Being a Christian is not a license to sin but a means to draw closer to God and live under His rule and blessings.*
- *Genuine confession and true repentance, putting your trust and faith in Christ.*

15. Throughout the verses 1 to 11, we see human steeped in sin and seemingly unable to get out of it by ourselves; but the chapter didn't end there - the chapter ended with God showing us mercy by sending a Saviour who will rescue us from our helplessness.

How has the study today shaped you in thinking about our God as the God of justice (punishing sin), yet the God of mercy (sending Jesus). How will you respond to the gospel message?

Study 3: “Judgement for Corrupt Leadership” (Micah 3)

Getting Started

1. What are some of the similarities of poor countries such as North Korea and Mexico?

The countries are poor not because they lack natural resources or talents, it is because these countries are governed by corrupt leaders who benefit themselves instead of the people.

Context

In Micah 1 and 2, we saw that God will proclaim judgement on His own people who has transgressed against Him, but promised to save a remnant of those who are faithful to Him.

Digging in

2. Read Micah. Divide the passage into smaller sections and give each section a title.

Verses	Title
3:1-4	<i>Judgement against the Rulers</i>
3:5-8	<i>Judgement against the Prophets</i>
3:9-12	<i>Judgement against the Priests & the Desolation of Jerusalem</i>

Read Micah 3:1-4

3. What is the role of the heads of Jacob and rulers of house of Israel?

As rulers of Israel, they are to:

- *Delight in and uphold God’s law*
- *Be accountable to the oppressed and defend the cause of the widows and the fatherless.*
- *Love what is right/hate evil.*
- *Be the people’s shepherd, feeding their flock and leading the*

4. How are they described? What kind of imagery is used here?

Their principle and depositions are bad: they love evil and hate good. They hate to do good and delight in mischief. They are cruel and severe towards those that are under their authority.

There is an imagery of cannibalism. They:

- *Tear the skin and flesh of God’s people*
- *Eat the flesh and flay the skin off God’s people*
- *Break their bones in pieces*
- *Chop them up like meat in a pot like flesh in cauldron*

5. How will God respond to these leaders?

They shall face judgement without mercy. They will come a time when these evil leaders will cry to God and God will hide His face from them when they cry out to Him. Now they turned their face against God and soon God will turn His face against them.

Read Micah 3:5-8

6. How did the prophets lead God's people astray? What is the motivation in leading God's people?

- *They bite with their teeth and cry peace. They will flatter and compliment those who feed them with good bits and will give them something to eat. But for those who did not do the same, they look upon them as enemies, and even prepare to war against them.*
- *They reward greedy and corrupt individuals with blessings of "peace" and against the powerless person who either out of his penury could not afford to give them what they want or refused to bribe them.*
- *Their motivation is personal gain, as compared to the true prophet (v8), who should be motivated by zeal for justice and inspired by the spirit of the Lord. They are a group of profit-seeking prophets proclaiming that all is well with the world as long as they received what they ask for.*

7. What will happen to these false prophets?

The judgement fits the sins they commit.

They will lose their gifts of prophecy (they will be thrown into darkness; they will receive no vision) and this will bring them public disgrace of their falsity and uncleanness.

8. What does a true prophet look like?

Like Micah, true prophet is filled with spirit of the Lord, and will uphold justice and denounce the sins of Israel.

Read Micah 3:9-12

9. The third section of judgement is addressed to whom? What are their sins?

- *The third section is addressed to the magistrate, false prophets as well as the priests.*
- *They are supposed to know and do justice but they dislike and distort justice. They built Jerusalem up through deadly injustice instead of building it up as a holy city.*
- *These people prostitute their power, gifts and talents for money.*

10. What do they claim in V11?

- *They claim that they lean on God and God will not bring disasters to his people.*
- *They have deluded themselves into a false faith. They only focus on proclaiming the blessings given by God and disregard the curse denounced by God when his people disobey Him. Hence, they have led God's people astray.*

11. What will happen to Jerusalem because of them?

The holy temple where God lived will be filled with unholiness, eventually will be forsaken.

Application

12. These leaders claim that they lean on God even when they are transgressing against God. What is the tendency of us doing the same? (We proclaim that we believe in Jesus but do not delight in God's law.)

13. Are there ways in which corrupt leadership still pollutes the church today? How does this impact the health of the church and our witness to the world?

14. How can we be supporting our church leaders and encouraging them in godliness?

Study 4: “Glimpse of a Perfect Kingdom” (Micah 4)

Getting Started

1. If you could envision a perfect country; what would be the characteristics of such a perfect country?

Get people thinking of what a perfect country is like as we will soon explore the reality of a perfect kingdom in the following verses of Micah 4.

Context

In Micah 1 to 3, we saw that God will proclaim judgement on His own people who have transgressed against Him. Furthermore, we also saw what Israel, a broken nation, looked like – not for the lack of resources or lack of an army but for lack of leadership, spiritual destitution, oppressing their own people and ultimately national disobedience towards the God who had always cared for them.

Digging In

2. Read Micah 4. Divide the passage into smaller sections and give each section a title.

Verses	Title
4:1-5	<i>God's kingdom and the character of its people</i>
4:6-8	<i>God's kingdom established by God</i>
4:9-13	<i>The birth pains of a renewed Zion through judgment on Israel and the nations</i>

Read Micah 4:1-3

3. What is Israel's current state in Micah 4?
 - *Micah 3:1-3: Under bad leaders who oppressed the people they were supposed to care for*
 - *Micah 2:3-5: A nation that will be destroyed by impending disaster and ultimately God's people displaced from it*
 - *These are some of the example of Israel's current disastrous state as a result of consistent sin and rebellion.*

4. However, what did Micah say would happen in “the latter days”?

A fulfilment of what God had intended for the nation of Israel to be:

- *The Lord’s house will be established on top of the mountains (God’s place)*
- *It will be inhabited by people of many nations who will willingly follow God (God’s people)*
- *God will rule over them (God’s rule)*
- *The inhabitants of Jerusalem will be under God’s blessings*

5. Why will God’s kingdom bring wars to an end? (v1-4)

God will teach them His ways and He will judge them fairly, thus putting an end to war as nations will no longer use weapons against each other anymore

- *There will only be one true faith – faith in the one true God.*
- *The nations will all follow the laws and the word of God.*
- *God’s judgments will be fair and just for all people, not like the rule of other gods.*
- *The rule of God will bring about security for all.*

Read Micah 4:4-8

6. Micah 4:4 mentioned that people will no longer live in fear when God rules His kingdom. Why will it be so?

They will willingly walk in God’s ways instead of the ways of other gods and as a result of that; they will know the way of peace with God and with each other.

7. Why will they willingly walk in God’s ways?

*(some knowledge of Biblical theology is needed here: Refer to Deut. 30; Ezek. 36:22-36, etc.)
Because of God’s initiative in cleansing and transforming*

8. How do we see the gospel demonstrated here?

These verses show the grace of God in seeking His people who cannot save themselves because they are spiritually dead and bringing them into a place that they did not work for/deserve since they are sinners who deserved judgment. We see the great extension of God’s mercy; withholding from them certain death (judgment on sin) and lavishes them with grace instead; giving them what they don’t deserve (a place in His kingdom).

Read Micah 4:9-13

9. What will happen before Zion’s rebirth? (Note: The birth will occur in Chapter 5, cf. 5:3).

Israel goes into captivity as punishment for their sins. God will judge sin. (v10)

10. What will rescue them from this captivity, punishment?

God will redeem them. It's interesting to note that God is the one who judges his people but he is also the one who redeems them from the punishment that they deserve. There is nothing that we can do to rescue ourselves from God's judgment. We need to turn to him alone.

11. Will God abandon His people in captivity?

No. Micah 4:10 says that they will go to exile into Babylon, BUT God will redeem them out of the hands of their enemies. We will see how God will redeem His people later in Micah chapter 5. Hence, do come back next session to find out more!

Application

12. What does our culture of pluralism teach us? How does Micah 4 challenge this view?

Pluralism teaches us that we need to accept every religion because every religion is true. We are taught that when we do this, then we will live at peace with one another. Micah points us to the latter days when the rule of the one true God will cover all the earth and peoples from other nations will come to receive instruction from Him. At that time, God's rule will result in peace for all nations that will last forever. But now there is no peace because the gods that we worship actually divide us.

13. Micah 4 paints an idyllic picture of what the kingdom of God looks like. At the heart of this kingdom is God and it is from obedience to him that peace comes about. As a Christian, does your experience of peace with God result in peace with the people around you? (If not, then we may need to ask if God is at the centre of our lives? Are we living in obedience to his word?)

15. Micah 4 also paints a picture of how God's people should respond to His rule; firstly, we should accept His grace and then yield to Him in obedience when He saved us not because of how good we are but because of how good He is. What are some of the areas you struggle with in believing in His goodness? How can we be praying that you may increase your faith in His goodness even though it may not be easy to fully understand it now?

Study 5: “The Coming King” (Micah 5)

Getting Started

1. Recall back someone in your life who has done something to take away your discomfort/ dislike. Share it with your group and tell them how you feel about it.

Context

From Micah 1 to 4, we see God’s judgement being proclaimed to His own people who sinned against Him; His people who practiced idolatry, corrupted rulers who oppressed the nation and false prophets who led the believers away from God. However, hope is seen when God saves the remnant of those who remained faithful to Him. Although Israel was under God’s judgement, God showed a glimpse of the perfect kingdom established in the latter days, where God will rule over His people and His people will be under Him, walking obediently in God’s law.

Digging In

2. Read Micah 5:1-15 and divide the passage into smaller sections and give each of them a title.

Verse	Title
1-3	<i>A promised King is born</i>
4-6	<i>The King will rule over His people</i>
7-9	<i>The King will rule over the remnant of Jacob</i>
10-15	<i>The LORD removes sins of His people and the disobedient nation</i>

Read Micah 5:1-3

3. What picture is being illustrated in v1? What does it imply?

The present distress faced by Jerusalem. Troops reflect the small remnant left of Israel’s army behind Jerusalem’s gates (cf. 1:8-16,2:2) and they are under attack by their enemy (siege is laid against them). Siege is used historically in Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem; but here it is referring to Sennacherib’s siege (cf. 2 Chronicles 32:10). The attack is described to the point that the victim is being strike on the face, which means they are defenceless, unable to even protect their faces; it signifies humiliation.

4. How is the turning point in v2 significant?

Discuss a bit about the turning point, the birth of the ruler of Israel. He is born in Bethlehem Ephrathah (Ephrathah is a district in Judah where Bethlehem was located; it vividly means "fruitful"). Bethlehem, Ephrathah and Judah reaches back to the origin of Messiah in the pure springs of Jesse and David (Isaiah 11:1), it matches the last clause in V2. It is a small, insignificant place for a ruler to be born. The coming of the ruler happens during the fall of Jerusalem in an insignificant place, and it is not by chance but God's divine plan.

The name of the town Bethlehem has a meaning. it means the house of bread, it is significant that Jesus is born there because Jesus is the bread of life. the bread of life was born in the house of bread.

God's providence for the life of the world from the little town named House of Bread

Before Jesus, that's where God provided for Israel's greatest human king - David

Then from there again comes God's greatest king - Jesus Himself, so it's very significant

v3 implies that Israel will be abandoned which refers back to V1, also seen in 4:9,11 where they are currently under distress and also the exile (4:10). However, God will not completely abandon His people(the silent 400 years) because a perfect ruler will come which is Jesus to redeem His people back to His land (when the 400 years is up), the rest (meaning remnants) will return (converted brothers too) to be under Him = His people.

Read Micah 5:4-6

5. How will the ruler rule over Israel and what will happen to them?

He stands and shepherd the flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God (V4); He shall be their peace(V5); he delivers his nations from Assyrians (v6).

They will dwell secure in the greatness of the ruler; The people of Israel are raised to defeat Assyria (v5, seven shepherd and eight princes), they will guard Assyria and Babylonia readily at their enemies' borders.

6. Compared with the rulers mentioned in previous chapters, how are they different from this ruler?

Previous rulers: unjust (3:1-3), abuse of power to the nations, corrupted; sinful, idolatrous.

This ruler: He rules rightly and justly, he restores peace and deliver the nations from the hands of enemies. He obeys and completely depends on God's strength, also honouring the Lord.

Read Micah 5:7-9

7. What pattern can you observe from v7 & v8? What are the implications that the author wants to address?

Pattern: (1) the subject, the future presence of the remnant among the nations. (2) the synonymous parallel/similes, e.g. like dew. like shower; like a lion, like a young lion. (3) the explanation to the similes.

v7: Dew and shower- signs of divine benediction; wait for- to look for something in eager anticipation

v8: Young lion- doubtful

The two concurrent scenarios among the nation: The remnant being source of salvation to some and tool of destruction to some. In both cases, God makes them triumphant.

8. What will eventually happen to the nations and the nations who attack Israel?

In light of the promises in V7 & V8, life is distributed to those to live and submit to God's rule and death is upon their enemies.

Read Micah 5:10-15

9. What did Israel benefit from looking for these things? (Horses & chariots, strongholds; sorceries & tellers of fortunes; carved images, pillars & works of hands; Asherah images & cities)

Horses & chariots, strongholds- military and buildings (Ps. 20:7)

Sorceries & tellers of fortunes- foreign source e.g. Eastern occultism & Philistine divination (cf. Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19: 26); secularism, indulge in desires to prosper by own might and the help of sorcery.

Carved images, pillars & works of hands- Pagan religion can manipulate the innate forces of life within nature through magical words and rituals. Carved images are products of human engineering, it shows that man's attempt of having life apart from his Creator; sacred stones (Baal, cf. 2 Kings 3:2; 10:26-27).

Asherah images & cities- wooden Asherah (female deity); cities- blood spattered altars.

10. How does God show His grace to His people that is still steeped in sin?

The act of sanctification (i.e. purging of the idols) can also be viewed as God's grace to His people because His people are unable to cleanse themselves from idolatry so He does it on their behalf without wiping them out when He can (He is justified even if He wipes His people out because of their violation of the covenant) but here God removes the idolatry without wiping them out. So again, we see God's enduring goodness and faithfulness towards Abraham that He sustained Abraham's people despite repeated failures. The personal idea is that God wants to shape us to be a people of His kingdom instead citizens of the outer darkness.

Study 6: “Lawsuit Against Israel’s Unfaithfulness” (Micah 6)

Getting started

1. Think of a time when someone broke a promise they made. How did you respond? (Or vice versa – i.e. you are the promise-breaker)

Context

So far in Micah, we have seen the pronouncement of God’s judgment upon Israel for their covenant unfaithfulness – whoring after other idols; upon the leaders for being corrupt and for oppressing the poor while accepting bribes from the rich. However, we also see signs of hope as God promised a King who will ‘shepherd the flock in the strength of the LORD’.

Digging in

Read Micah 6 and divide them into smaller sections

Verses	Title
V1-5	<i>God’s lawsuit against Israel</i>
V6-8	<i>What God requires of His people</i>
V9-16	<i>God’s covenantal curses upon Israel</i>

God’s lawsuit against Israel (6:1-5)

2. Fill up the table to get a clearer picture of the ‘courtroom’.

Plaintiff	<i>The LORD</i>
Messenger on behalf of the plaintiff	<i>Micah</i>
Witnesses and jury	<i>Mountains</i>
Defendant / the accused	<i>Israel, ‘his people’</i>

3. How does God address Israel in v2, v3? What does that signify?

*‘My people’: A reminder of **God’s covenant** with Israel – that He will be their God, and they will be His people (Exodus 6:7). This lays the context for this ‘judgment’ / ‘accusation’ – covenant infidelity / unfaithfulness.*

4. How has God been faithful in this covenant?

- *Redeemed them from slavery in Egypt*
- *Gave them good leaders (Moses, Aaron, Miriam)*
- *Protected them from both political and spiritual enemies (Pharoah, Balak + Balaam incident – cf. Numbers 22:1)*

What God requires of His people (6:6-8)

5. How does the 'worshipper' in v6-7 respond to God's goodness recounted in v4-5?

Outwardly, he 'bows' and suggests to offer a whole list of sacrifices (notice the increase in price / value of these sacrifices – an increasing bid to win God's favour); but in actual fact, this stemmed from a deep disregard of God; it's insulting to say the least – to think that God can be bribed - turning this covenant into a contract instead.

6. What, then, is the right response? How would it have looked like in their time? So far in Micah, do we see them responding this way?

- *'Do justice and love kindness' – this would mean stepping in to deliver the weaker, wronged party – especially as one who is in a socially superior position; doing so out of love and mercy for the weaker brother. Israel has clearly done just the contrary (2:1-2, 3:1-3, 5-7, 9-11).*
- *'Walk humbly with God' – living in conformity to God's will; with Him as the ruler – rather than whoring themselves after other idols; which again – we see them doing just the opposite (1:7).*
- *Ritual adherence (sacrifices etc) on its own cannot replace the covenant obligation to love God and to love each other. And they are without excuse, because God has already told them about what they are to do from the get go, right after delivering them from slavery in Egypt.*

God's covenantal curses upon Israel (Micah 6:9-16)

7. Observe the 'charges' brought against Israel in v11-12. How have they violated the standard required by God in v8?

Instead of doing justice / loving kindness, they have defrauded their fellow brothers with false measures and weights, abusing the poor and powerless with their lies.

8. What judgment does God bring on them – is God being excessively harsh?

God brings them judgment that's fitting to their sin; the curses in accordance to the covenant.

- *Affliction of the body (Lev 26:16)*
- *Loss of offspring (Deut. 28:18)*
- *Fruitless harvest (Deut. 28:40, 51; Lev 26:16, 26)*

The extent of their evil was compared to that of Omri and Ahab's (1 Kings 16:25-34) – who were infamous for their idolatry and abandonment of God. Again, thinking of it in light of God's goodness mentioned in v4-5, of the covenantal relationship that God shares with Israel – this judgment was fitting.

Study 7: “The Ultimate Triumph of God’s Kingdom”

(Micah 7)

Getting Started

1. Recall an incident where you have sinned against a person e.g. your family members/ friends/ the people around you. How confident are you that you would be forgiven by the person?

Context

Last study, we learned about God’s lawsuit against Israel for their covenant unfaithfulness. However, God remains faithful by redeeming them from slavery in Egypt, giving them good leaders and protecting them from political and spiritual enemies. We have seen that the right response to God’s goodness is to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. In this concluding chapter, we see that God promises to restore His people who repent and show faithfulness to Him.

Digging in

2. Read Micah 7. Divide the passage into smaller sections and give each section a title.

Verses	Title
1-6	<i>A lament over a decadent society</i>
7-10	<i>Confidence in God to save after/through judgement</i>
11-17	<i>A promise of restoration</i>
18-20	<i>God’s steadfast love and compassion</i>

Read Micah 7:1-6

3. How was the state of society described in verses 1-3 and 5-6? How did the author feel about the society?
 - *V2 - This is speaking of a society that has no morals at all. They are degraded, to where it would be difficult to find even one person living for God. They will even murder, if it will help their personal cause. When they should be trying to help their brother, they are scheming every way they know how to cheat him*
 - *V3 - This is speaking of constant demands of corrupt leaders (“ask” and “utters”). Their hands are seeking evil things to do.*
 - *V5-6 – This is speaking of the moral degeneration of social and family relationships. It is unsafe to trust anyone, including family members and neighbours.*
 - *V1 - “Woe is me!”. Micah is grieved at sin in Israel. There is no fruitfulness/godly remnant left in Israel. The watchmen have warned them of their evil, and now the day of their judgment is here (v 4). But even in the face of his warnings there is no change.*

Read Micah 7:7-10

4. What was Micah's response in the midst of this dire situation? What is the significance of his response?
 - *Micah contrasted himself with the unfaithful leaders. He will look to the Lord and wait for Him, the God of salvation (v 7)*
 - *Micah also acknowledges his sin and repents.*
 - *His response expresses his quiet confidence that God will act (i.e forgives those who repent). It also shows that he is part of the remnant, even if he is still a sinner. The basis of confidence that he will rise is that God will plead his case and establish him as righteous. (The basis of confidence that he will rise is in God's covenantal faithfulness, v.18-20)*
 - *Hence, it is important that we recognise our sinful nature and cast ourselves on the Lord as our only hope. When under trials, we should continually look to the Lord that we may have strength and grace to trust in him, and to be examples to those around us. (When we undergo trials, the temptation that we face is to doubt God's goodness. We need to remember that he who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all...Rom 8:32, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? This is the basis of the new covenant that we live in today.)*

Read Micah 7:11-17

5. In verses 11-13, Micah speaks representing Israel. What does the prophet expect to see happen for Israel?
 - *v11 - Expansion of Israel's borders (cf. Ex 23:31, Isa. 26:15). Jerusalem will be rebuilt i.e. when Israel's captivity is over. God will send a call out far and wide to gather and restore His people.*
 - *v12- Movement of people to Israel (cf. Isa. 11:11-12, Zech. 10:9-10). When the new kingdom is set up, people will come from all the nations mentioned here. Jerusalem had been a place, where people from many nations came to worship. It will be that way again. The Jews will come home from their captive lands to live.*
 - *v13- Destruction of Israel's enemies. However, due to sin, the world will be judged by God, and they will be desolate.*
6. As Israel is lead out of this hopeless situation, what will their future look like?
 - *The Lord will feed and protect the nation. The good Shepherd is their provider- leads them to green pastures (Bashan and Gilead) and where there is pure water. They will neither hunger nor thirst, because the good Shepherd cares for them. Note: Bashan and Gilead are two fertile areas east of the Jordan that were taken by the Assyrians after 734BC*
 - *Marvellous things will be performed. The Lord declared that He would show His people miracles like those associated with the exodus from Egypt (v.15)*
7. What impact will Israel have upon the nations? What does it imply?
 - *The nations will be ashamed and they will fear the Lord (v 16).*
 - *When Israel is restored to the land and enjoys a restored relationship with the Lord, then those who opposed God's people will see how wrong they were to fight against them.*

- *Their fear of Israel and Israel's God has been renewed. They will crawl around like a snake in their shame and fear*
- *Seeing the greatness of God's restoration will make the nations respect the Lord in a way they didn't before. They will see the power and love of God in action*
- *Again and again we see that God's ultimate purpose for Israel was to be a witness to the nations. Here we see that in the last days, the nations will turn to God.*

Read Micah 7:18-20

8. In face of impending judgement, why was Micah confident that God would save?
- *God's saving acts in the past (6: 4-5, 7: 14-15) provide hope for his saving acts in the future (7: 19-20).*
 - *This question also emphasizes God's unique character: forgiving, slow to anger, delights in mercy and compassionate*
 - *Grace flowing from the Lord's steadfast love overcomes the penalty due to sin. Forgiveness is possible because of God's faithfulness to his promises to our fathers (Abraham and Jacob) (cf. Gen 12:1-9)*
 - *In concluding His prophecy, Micah sees God's future work as a continuation of His past work to the fathers of Israel. Micah knew that the same love, compassion, and mercy He showed to their fathers was available to them - if they received it in faith and remained trusting in the God who keeps his promises.*

Application

9. Micah lamented that the godly had perished from the land and that there was an absence of upright people (Micah 7:2). The godly play a vital role in society. Jesus said we are to be salt and light in the world (cf. Mat 5:13-16). Salt preserves and spices and light enables men to see what they otherwise would not be able to see. In light of the study, how can we be the salt and light to the people around us?
10. In the NT, we learn of a time when the ungodly will increase (cf. 2 Tim 3:1-5). We may also see this happening in our universities, workplaces, and society. What can we learn from our study of Micah about how we are to respond in such situations?
11. If God is this merciful to those who sin against Him, how are we showing forgiveness/ mercy to those who sin against us?