

Micah Chapters 3-4 – John Karmelich

1. We left off with Micah in a bad mood. He's pretty much spent the first two chapters of this seven chapter book condemning the Israelites for sinning against God and their fellow Israelites. That'd leave the Israelites wondering, what about our leaders? Don't they get some of the blame? Yes, I would say that's true and so does God. That's the main point of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 then moves to the question, if we're all in big trouble, what'll become of us? If God's going to bring down the hammer for us failing to be a witness for Him, what's the future hold for us Israelites as a nation? That's Chapters 3 and 4 in a few thoughts. Chapter 4 gives some good news as Micah switches to a positive message. That's why I call this lesson, "The really bad news and the really good news". I'll talk about the specifics in a moment. First, I should discuss what many of you are thinking are thinking now: Why should I care about any of these people who lived many millenniums ago?
 - a) The issue is not about feeling sorry for people who lived long ago. Part of the issue is for us to realize that Jesus will return one day to "set up shop" and run the world from Israel, so we better be "pro-Israel" for that reason alone. However, that's Chapter 4. The issue to consider in Chapter 3 is if we hold any sort of leadership position, be it an involvement in our church our community or in government, we need to realize God holds us to a higher standard than even our community may hold us to. God expects us to be a good witness for Him in our roles as leaders. If we're not leaders, realize that God may call us to such a position one day, or at the least we need to know the standards for that leadership.
 - b) While Chapter 3 is not a manual on how to govern effectively, it will show us a few things about the danger of corruption and the price we have to pay for that corruption. What I'm getting at is no one gets away with anything. We may be angry at our leaders for doing a thing they shouldn't be doing, but there is a God in heaven who judges all people fairly. I am just saying that is His business to eternally judge our behavior and not ours.
 - c) OK, what about the fact that Christians are supposed to forgive others? We forgive as we don't want to let people continue to hurt us. Punishment is a separate issue. What if that person in leadership is saved? Won't God just forgive them? Remember for the Christian our eternity depends upon how we acted as a witness for Jesus. All I'm saying is a person may still believe Jesus is God, and mess up badly as a leader. That person may not suffer in hell, but they may lose heavenly rewards for bad leadership. My point again is how we act as leaders is a part of God's judgment, and that is the underlying point of Chapter 3.
2. Enough of the bad news of Chapter 3. The good news of Chapter 4 is the perfect leader will come to rule the world one day. The question for us is how will all those details in Chapter 4 affect our lives here and now? We understand we have to be pro-Israel by the fact God is Pro-Israel. Next, we have to realize that God can't go back on His unconditional promises. Just as He made one to us Christians that our salvation is secure, so He can't go back on His unconditional promise that the land of Israel is for them. That's why Chapter 4 focuses on the good news of Jesus returning, so the Israelites realize that despite the "hammer coming down" in Chapter 3, that's not the end.
3. With that said, let me give you a few more specifics about these chapters, and then we'll start on the details. Chapters 1-2 were pretty much one big condemnation of Israel for their sins. We do have to keep in mind that the Israelites back then did not have the Spirit of God living in each of them and God sent prophets like Micah to remind them why God saved them in the first place.
 - a) Can't the Israelites just say, "Hey, it's not our fault, our leaders are messed up and we just followed along". I find that most leaders reflect what the leaders want. In that vocabulary, it's kind of like saying if it's popular to worship false gods, we leaders will do the same. It is not saying the leaders are more sinful than everyone else. The condemnation is for not doing anything to change the situation. It is a condemnation for not rising above what the "masses" are doing. God holds leaders to a higher standard that they should know better. That in effect is the underlying condemnation of Chapter 3.

- b) When we read the specific's to be honest, it gets gross. The leaders were accused of eating the flesh and breaking their bones. I'm not positive what the literal aspect refers to, but I'd suspect it refers to allowing murder to occur. I also suspect it's for allowing the poor to go through all sorts of suffering without those leaders doing anything about it. All I'm saying is to warn you the literal aspects of this chapter get pretty gross as God's condemning the leaders of Israel for acting that way.
 - c) The good news is Micah "turns on a dime" when we get to Chapter 4. It's as if he wants us to realize this is not "the" end. Despite the fact that God promised them the land of Israel, it is conditional upon their obedience to Him. It's also unconditional in that they'll get that land forever. So how does God reconcile "conditional" with "unconditional"? By realizing a day will come where God will forgive them of their sins as they will accept Jesus as their long lost Messiah. How will that work out? That's what "Revelation" discusses as well as many Old Testament passages such as we'll read here in Chapter 4 of Micah.
 - d) All I'm saying is just as Israel "collectively" can't permanently blow it because of the fact of God's promise as being unconditional, so we as Christians can't blow it in terms of losing our salvation. We can blow it as a witness for God, but God's promise of a resurrection to heaven is an unconditional promise to us as well. The big question all us Christians must ask is, "OK, if we realize we can't mess up our salvation, what are we doing to thank God for that salvation?" That's what living the Christian life is all about.
 - e) For us devout Christians who realize all of this, think of these chapters that discuss what's the really bad news and the really good news that despite whatever suffering we can deal with in this lifetime, the worse it'll last is one lifetime. To quote an old saying, "Suffering is inevitable, our attitude is always a choice". God wants us to choose joy while we honor Him with our lives no matter what we face in this life.
 - f) On that sort-of happy note, it's time to go through the details of these two chapters.
4. Chapter 3, Verse 1: Then I said, "Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel.
- a) As all my regulars know, the chapter breaks were not added until millenniums after this book was written. However, Micah is one of those books that breaks nicely into different sections. What we call "Chapter 3" is definitely addressed to the leaders of both the North and South Israelite kingdoms that existed at that time. When we get to Chapter 4 in a bit, the focus is on all Israelites. My simple point here is that the book of Micah "breaks well" into chapters even though those splits didn't occur until long after it was written.
 - b) Let me next address, "which leaders". Micah's addressing this section of his letter to both the spiritual leaders (including false prophets who had power) as well those governing at that time. It's like saying, those on the government payroll, God's got a message for you!
 - c) It would probably help to "time stamp" this verse. Micah wrote this book between 750 and 700 BC. The Northern Kingdom came to an end in 701BC if my memory is correct. All I'm saying is Micah wrote this sometime before the "North" ended. I state all of that, as I want you to notice this letter to the leaders is addressed to both the leaders in the Northern and Southern Israelite Kingdoms that existed at that time. If you're new to Israel's history they were split into two kingdoms at that time. The southern one lasted another 100 years or so before it too came to an end. The Israelites who were not killed were literally removed out of that land by those two conquests. Another empire came on the scene about another 100 years later and allowed the Israelites to return to their land as a part of this new empire.
 - d) The point of all this history is to realize the Israelites were parts of other empires from this time period all the way until 1948 other than a brief time period when they did overthrow Greek rule.
 - e) I'm giving you this background to realize when God says He's condemning the Israelites due to their sin, it was serious enough to last thousands of years. If you want a reason not to mess with God, that alone is proof that God expects us to be a good witness for Him as we read of the consequences here in these verses.

5. Verse 1b: Should you not know justice, ² you who hate good and love evil; who tear the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones; ³ who eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot?"
- a) Well, Micah doesn't waste time. Half way through Verse 1 he's listing their sins. What is the essential point here is that the leaders weren't being "just" in their leadership. What I suspect that means is innocent people were punished for crimes they didn't commit or did have to suffer for things that weren't their faults.
 - b) One has to admit, verses 2-3 are very graphic. It says the leaders "tore the skins off of their bones as well as their flesh". As my regulars know, I'd rather error on the side of being too literal versus not literal enough, so whatever the crimes were, it's serious enough that God is aware of them as well as "little old Micah" as he described it in these verses. I suspect it means that people were killed in violent ways for failing to live as the leaders demanded. The leaders were effectively saying, "Don't mess with us or you will suffer the same fate!"
 - c) In the Northern Israelite Kingdom at that time, a requirement was to worship a false deity called Baal. If memory is correct people were required to kiss a statue of Baal to show one is loyal to that false god. Even in the more "godly" Southern Kingdom, many people there also turned to that worship. The false religious leaders and the government leaders lead a major effort to enforce those laws. It's as if they were thinking, "We don't want Baal to be angry at us, so everyone must do as we command at penalty of a painful death". If you're thinking you're life is hard now, one can see what happens to any society that turns away from what God desires of us.
 - d) If you wonder why God came down so hard on those two kingdoms way back then, they got to a point where the leaders themselves were cruel and God effectively had no choice but to wipe out His people (while preserving a remnant to survive another day!)
 - e) Ok John, this is sad and horrid to think about. You can assume most of us who take time to read a bible study do care about worshipping God, why should we think about all this stuff? For starters, it's a vivid reminder of how hard God is going to come down on those who refuse to turn to Him with their lives. Next, it's a good reminder that we all need on a regular basis that "God isn't to be messed with". As I said in the last lesson, if God has called us to be His witness to the world, the good news is we get to draw close to Him as well as have tremendous joy in our lives. The bad news is we're accountable for what we know about Him or should know based on how we could be using our time for Him! As we read all this horrid stuff that occurred millenniums ago, it's there to remind us that the God we worship isn't to be messed with and consequences exist when we turn from what He has called us to do: Be a witness for Him in the world around us!
 - f) OK enough condemnation for Verses 1-3. Let's try Verse 4. :)
6. Verse 4: Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done.
- a) Verse 4 leads to an important question: Is it ever too late to seek God? The way I look at verses like this is God's always desires we turn to Him, but one can reach a point in life of not really wanting to change! To share one of my favorite expressions on this topic, "Don't go down that road, it's greased and it's hard to turn around!" Let's face it, anybody who's on the verge of being thrown into hell would plead for mercy. That's when He effectively says, "Why didn't you do that when you were alive!"
 - b) Remember that this text is written to Israelites. They knew their history. They knew they were separated to be a witness for God. If they've lived their lives ignoring Him or going after other gods, it'd make sense there has to be a "too late". So when is it too late for non-believers we know? We don't know. I'm positive we'll be shocked who is in heaven and who won't be there. I'm well aware there are many people who live out their lives as they think, "Why should I care what God thinks of my life?" The point is we're all accountable to Him whether we're willing to accept it or not.

- c) To state the obvious some more, I realize innocent people were hurt by this judgment. I'm very aware babies were probably killed by this cruelty. I can sleep at night as I realize the only way life is fair is if there is a god who'll judge the world for how people act!
 - d) I'm equally convinced there is a point where it's too late for people to change. One can get so set in one's ways that the only time one is yelling at God for a second chance is when it is too late. We never know when "too late" exists, so we pray for all people and be a living witness for God to all people not knowing who is and who isn't saved.
 - e) Anyway, that's the key point of Verse 4.
7. Verse 5: This is what the LORD says: "As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them, they proclaim 'peace'; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him.
- a) This verse is directed directly at false prophets. There were people there who earned their living by preaching false messages. Like I said in my last lesson, false prophets don't wear a button saying, "I'm a false prophet, listen to me." We know who's a true prophet of God versus a false prophet based on what they preach. A reason God calls on us to study His word is so we can recognize a false prophet when we hear one. If a person is saying to us, "We don't have to repent. All is well, enjoy your life and honor these local deities just like other nations around us are doing", you know you're barking up the wrong tree!
 - b) Let's say two people are preaching that God is going to do something. Some are saying a war is coming. Others say it's peace. How do we know who is right? If one is saying we should trust in God for help or is claiming to speak in His name, the key is to compare the message to God's word. If it's a simple "war versus peace" message we can't tell.
 - c) So how could the Israelites know Micah was true prophet if war hadn't occurred yet? It's a matter of watching the world, trusting in God and seeing the results. It's always a good idea to pray for God's peace in the world. The danger is ignoring Him and proclaiming to anyone willing to listen "all is well". That's what the false teachers were doing!
 - d) It's one thing to trust in God when it's legal to do so and no one bothers us if we can go to church each week. It's another to live in a country where religious freedom isn't allowed. It is that way throughout most of the world through its history. Those Israelite leaders were saying in effect, "You must worship our false gods and if you don't you'll suffer the horrid things described in Verses 1-3." If we want our faith tested, ask if we're willing to worship Him when it's illegal to do so. That's what most of those Israelites were facing back then!
 - e) For those of us who are living in the United States and are free to worship any god as long as we're not infringing on anyone else's rights, realize that in such situations God holds us to a higher standard. It's like saying, "Since you got that much freedom, you better use it to make a difference for Me or they'll be a high price to pay." Yes that's a scary thought to be required to live that way, but that's what we Christians are called to do.
 - f) Meanwhile, I left the Israelites in big trouble!
8. Verse 6: Therefore night will come over you, without visions, and darkness, without divination. The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them. ⁷ The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God."
- a) Why does God allow false prophets to speak on the behalf of those deities and receive the visions in the first place? Why doesn't He just "cut them off" and most people will realize we really don't have a choice? My answer is based on a lecture I heard on why He allows free will: If we're punished every time we're about to yell at someone or hurt someone, we would be complaining that God never gives us a chance to prove ourselves. By us having free will, God is giving us the choice to turn to Him or ignore Him. That way God forms a two-way love relationship with those who choose to serve Him.
 - b) Anyway, now that I've made that statement, Micah's saying the false prophets of his time will lose their ability to "divine" the will of false gods. Do I believe such power is real? Of course, God allows it to show that His power is greater. I also believe God can cut off such things at times, to prove He is greater than all the other gods that exist in this world!

- c) So how does this actually happen? Do the false teachers start walking around blind? Do they say, I haven't had any dreams at all lately? I suspect whatever demonic powers they do have will simply be cut off. It's kind of how I view "soothsayers" and the like today. I would argue that many are con artists, but some do access demonic powers. That's why I would argue Christians shouldn't mess with such things. The way those Israelites learned who was right and wrong, was based on the invading armies coming. The false prophets would say they did not see this coming or something to that affect. However it happened, the point is Micah as a true prophet, his visions prove he was God inspired. Whatever the false prophets "conjured up" was lost in history.
 - d) OK John, this is all interesting ancient history, and we promise to avoid the fortune-tellers and the like for a while. How do we apply this? Let me talk about seeking God's will for the future: God doesn't say to us for example, "Here's the plan for the next 30 years of our lives". I'd argue the way we discern His will is simply by studying His word on a regular basis, doing what we have to do (say to make a living) and combine what we enjoy doing in order to make a difference for Jesus. When we make that effort to make a difference for Him, over time God will guide us down the path He wants us to go. Well, what does that have to do with this passage? It's His way of saying He doesn't want us to seek any false prophets (think fortune tellers and the like). He promises to guide us the way He desires if we're willing to let Him. With that said, time to get back to Micah.
9. Verse 8: But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin.
- a) Here's a question: Is it ok to brag about what God's doing in our lives? That apparently is what Micah is doing in this verse. My view is if we're giving God the glory for what He's doing in our lives, it's acceptable. I remember learning a long time ago that compliments are like perfume or cologne. A little is nice, but if it enters the room before we do, then we are wearing way too much.
 - b) I'll give a practical example. Once a month I check my statistics of how many people read these studies. I always give God the glory for what He is accomplished through me. Our deal is "once a month, no more and no less". That way "my cologne isn't entering the room before I am".
 - c) Let me apply that principal to Micah. He doesn't spend two chapters bragging about how God has used him. It's only one verse here. Other prophets also describe in their own way how God has used them. In every case that part of the text isn't a dominant portion, but a simple comment to God like this one here in Micah.
 - d) OK why is Micah saying this? I don't think it's to brag. I suspect it's to get his audience to turn away from the false prophets and listen to what God has to say. That is why he says he is filled with the Holy Spirit. One has to remember that in "Old Testament times", the Spirit of God comes and goes upon people. With Christians, the Spirit takes up residence within us. All I'm saying is Micah wanted people around him to get the fact that what he was preaching is God inspired, "deal with it".
 - e) So what's the key message here? To make the Israelites aware of their sins. God wants to have a loving relationship with us, but our behavior matters. It isn't to earn our salvation, but to be a good witness for Him. That's why Micah is in a "bad mood" through most of the first few chapters of this book.
 - f) Like I said, the good news is coming in Chapter 4. Until then we have to finish Chapter 3.
10. Verse 9: Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right;¹⁰ who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness.
- a) In case you've forgotten, Micah is focusing this chapter on the leaders. The reason we get another "introduction" statement here is to remind those reading Micah what the specific sins were that the leaders were guilty of doing. Verses 9 to 11 cover what those sins are.

- b) There's an old joke that says Christians think of God as a "God of love". Religious Jewish people think of God as a "God of Justice". Obviously, God has both qualities. My point is that is what most religious people of both groups tend to emphasize. In the final verses of Chapter 3, the focus is on God's justice.
 - c) Think about it this way: If the leaders of a country are not busy say fighting a war with at that time, what's their primary role? To judge disputes and settle issues. Even those who are called to be religious leaders spend a lot of time dealing with issues over conflict in the community or in a home. My point is simply that being a leader means one has to judge a situation as best one can and make a decision.
 - d) OK that's stating the obvious. Now let's look at the verses again. The condemnation here is over not being fair in one's judgment and even allowing some to get away with murder and other wicked things. Most of us who've lived for a while, have seen a tough decision that we may or may not think is fair, but we have to accept the leader's authority and then move on with our lives. During Micah's time, this is a classic case of leaders who do take advantage of their positions and allow horrid things to occur. I suspect most of us can fill in our own examples, so I'll stop here at this point.
 - e) Well then, why does God allow our "examples" to get away with things and not put down "His fist" like He did in Micah's day? God will win in the long run, and those who benefit from other's suffering in this lifetime, can only enjoy that benefit at the most for this life!
 - f) Meanwhile, I've got one more verse of sin to discuss in this chapter.
11. Verse 11: Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us."
- a) I'm overdue for one of my paraphrases: "Look, so I take a bribe in a few court cases, what is the big deal? So we charge to read people's fortunes, we've got to eat too! Besides this is God's land and His temple's here, so what disaster can come here?" Since they realized it was His land, they thought they could get away with murder because there's nothing God would do to change the fact it is His land. To state the obvious, they had to learn the hard way that God expects obedience from those of us He has called to be His witnesses to the world. Again, not to earn His love, but only out of gratitude for what He has done for us, saved us from our sins.
 - b) Obviously judges taking bribes is wrong. Let me discuss "priests teaching for a price". It's not a condemnation against earning a living. It's a condemnation against taking money to teach things contrary to God's word. I don't have a problem with "passing the plate" when going to church. I have a big problem when I watch people teach things that obviously go against His word and people are "fleecing the flock" to make those proclamations.
 - c) While I'm in the neighborhood. Let me discuss "faith healers". God does not give anyone the power to wave their hands and empty hospitals. I believe the real thing will occur on some occasions not due to the power of the "faith healer" but due to the faith of the person trusting in God. For the handicapped and the physically suffering, it is a great idea to ask for prayer and ask God to end our suffering. However, it's His decision when to end such suffering and no "faith healer" ever does the trick! As I said earlier, "Pain is inevitable, but happiness is a choice." That's how we should view whatever suffering we must face!
 - d) OK then, final verse of this chapter.
12. Verse 12: Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.
- a) Before we get into the good news of Chapter 4, we'll get one final verse explaining what is going to happen in Israel soon. Remember the leaders were thinking, "God can never kick us out of this land, His temple was here and He worked hard to get us here." Micah gives us God's response to that argument by saying that Israel will be mowed down like a grass in a field, and the capital city of Jerusalem would be ruined to rubble.

- b) I'm sure the anti-Israelites all over the world would read that verse and think, "Great idea, let's do that again!" What most people don't realize is there is a demonic influence among those people who hate the idea of Israel's existence. Satan's main goal is essentially to stop God's will from occurring. That means preventing Jesus' Second Coming. If Jerusalem is not standing when Jesus returns, and Israel is dead, then He can't rule from there. All I'm saying is I'm convinced all efforts to wipe Israel off the map are demonic inspired whether people realize it or not.
 - c) OK John, if that's true, why would a prophet of God announce this destruction? Because it got so bad there in terms of people ignoring God, that it was necessary for Him to make a point that obedience to Him is even more important than them occupying that land. Does that mean God could allow them to be wiped out again? I never put anything past God. I just know that He demands obedience and He also promised that Jesus would return as to "set up shop" to rule the world from Jerusalem one day. How He reconciles His corporate relationship with Israel versus His demand for obedience is "His problem". What you and I as Christians should be concerned about is being a good witness for Jesus. How God will wrap up life as we know it and when is His business. The bible tells us a lot of ways we'll recognize it when it occurs. The focus here is on the fact that God has allowed that city to be destroyed essentially as punishment for His chosen people failure to go along with His plans. That included idol worship during Micah's time and the failure to recognize Jesus First Coming when it occurred. I know many Jewish people disagree with the second one but I'm convinced it's true. No matter what you think caused Israel's fall several times in history, the point is they did fall and the Messiah hasn't "set up shop" yet.
 - d) I get into all that theology here, because Micah is blatantly describing the fall of Jerusalem as well as the Southern Kingdom. That literally happened about 100 years after he wrote this book. The Babylonians rose to power, conquered the Assyrian Empire and also came to Israel and literally destroyed that land piece by piece. What Micah predicted here came literally true within a relatively short time after he wrote this.
 - e) One has to admit, if Micah ended at Chapter 3, it'd be a depressing little book although it literally came true as it was written and what Micah said about how the Israelites acted at that time was also literal. The good news is Micah switches gears in Chapter 4 to give us some good news after all this really bad news. OK then, Chapter 4.
13. Chapter 4, Verse 1: In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.
- a) Let me begin this chapter with a few technical notes. In Hebrew thought, "mountain" is a codeword for government. Just as a mountain is a big dominating feature over an area, so a government is a dominating manmade feature over an area. My point is when a prophet of God uses the word "mountain", it can (but not always) refer to a government that rules over a specific area.
 - b) Also realize Jerusalem is up in the mountains (high hills). The text implies Jerusalem will be raised up. Does that mean the physical location will be the new "Mount Everest"? I am thinking it is not that literal but I won't put it past God. What I suspect it simply means is the idea that when the Messiah comes, Jerusalem will be the center of world power.
 - c) I admit I love the fact the text says, "People's will stream to it" in this English translation. When Micah was written, the idea of human flight was unheard of. Of course, it means a lot of people will travel there by the means of that day. I'm also convinced this verse hints of flight as it says many people will "stream" there.
 - d) Remember that when Micah wrote this book, there was no chapter breaks. The last verse of the chapter said that Jerusalem will be destroyed. Now in the first verse of Chapter 4 it says that God's "mountain" will be raised above the hills, and what that implies is the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt so that the Messiah (who Christians call Jesus) will rule there one day. That'll become more clear in Verse 2. Speaking of which.

14. Verse 2: Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
- a) It's hard for us to imagine a world that says, "Let's all go to Jerusalem to hear God's word from the guy who inspired it in the first place". Most of us are aware of how much hatred there is of Israel in the world. It's hard for me to picture leaders of Muslim countries going to Israel to learn about God's word. Obviously, this must be "end time" stuff, as the world would have to change a lot for a majority of people to become "Pro-Israel".
 - b) I like to listen to radio host Dennis Prager discuss his views of Evangelical Christianity as a religious Jewish person. The short version is if the Christians are right about Jesus or if the religious Jewish people are right about someone else being the Messiah, either way it's a victory for the Israelites. It's like saying, "either way we win". Obviously, I believe Jesus is God and He's the one who will return to Israel one day as their long promised Messiah. That's pretty standard Christian theology "101".
 - c) What is amazing to consider here is a few verses ago, Micah was telling us of the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. Then he switches "on a dime" to tell us of nations flocking to Israel to hear the word of God coming from there. The verse does not mention the Messiah by that title, but it does say He (with a capital H) to imply that fact of the Messiah being the "head guy" there teaching the bible!
 - d) I have to admit, I am fascinated by how this will work practically. Will Jesus be speaking in a big auditorium with people entering and leaving? Will there be people at the door to tell others, "Wait outside, next show in 15 minutes?" Micah doesn't give us a lot of how's. He just figures it's shocking enough to announce that Jerusalem will be ruined, rebuilt in a future day and the Messiah will rule from there despite that destruction. As I've said for a long time, I figure if God wants to do something like create a different world for us to live in, that's His business as it's His world to begin with!
 - e) As I stated in my lesson introduction, I'm pro-Israel as the God I worship is pro-Israel. It's pretty evident here in this verse and if I believe Micah is the word of God, I must accept it as being true. We'll get quotes from Micah in Chapter 5, but that's in the next lesson.
15. Verse 3: He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.
- a) Before I discuss Verse 3, realize that Verses 3-4 are almost identical to verses Isaiah wrote in his book. Scholars ponder, "who borrowed from who?" Both lived during the same era of time. If both of those men were inspired by what God told them, why should it shock us that God would communicate similar messages to both people? Those of us who teach realize that repetition is necessary in order for a point to stick. Personally, I couldn't care less who wrote this first. It's repeated for emphasis, so accept it and move on.
 - b) Now that I've got that statement out of my system, let's talk about this verse. It says when the Messiah comes (that's the "He" of this verse) one of the things that He does is judge all disputes between nations. It's a way of saying wars won't exist anymore as whatever the Messiah says will be the final word on all disputes. Consider the Middle East history for a moment. Has it ever been peaceful? For the fact that this Messiah "solves all that" once and for all is a good reason alone to want Jesus to return and return now.
 - c) I wonder how does His Word get enforced? Does Jesus just say, "That's what I say, accept it, deal with it and get on with your lives?" I suspect one reason we're resurrected is so we can enforce His rules whether people want to live that way or not.
 - d) The really good news of this verse is there will be no more wars. Those who study history will tell you how rare it is to have even a single year without a war occurring somewhere in this world. It's hard to picture a world where there is no hatred of Israel and people do go there to end fighting. One has to admit, all of this seems like a "pipe dream".

- e) Just because we have a hard time picturing this literally happening, doesn't mean it won't. As I said, I put nothing past God in terms of what He's capable of doing or allowing! It is also a reminder that no matter what we're dealing with in this life, it's "short lived". There is a God who rules over this world and one day that will be more literal than we realize.
 - f) Let me ask the important question here: If Jesus is going to literally "set up shop" one day in Israel and the world will be at peace then, why should I think about that when I've got my own problems to worry about here and now? The answer is about putting our issues in perspective of God's rule over our lives. Again, whatever we have to deal with will last at the most for one lifetime. You may say, "That may be easy for you to say, but you have no idea what I have to deal with." As I have been saying, "Pain is inevitable, happiness is a choice we make at any given moment." I can't fix your problems and you can't fix mine. All we can do is have the right perspective about life, and that's what the bible teaches us as we go through this life.
 - g) Anyway, back to Micah. The last part of this verse essentially says that we'll convert our weapons of war into other things as those things won't be needed anymore. So does that mean, tanks will be disassembled with the steel being used for cars? Does it mean those who work in the military will have to look for other jobs? Probably. Remember what is being preached here: Despite the problems Israel is facing at Micah's time, it's not going to be forever, as the Israelites will live there again one day in peace with Jesus enforcing rule at that time!
16. Verse 4: Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.
- a) If you ever get the chance to travel to Israel and one gets away from the big cities, a lot of the land is used to grow things. Vineyards are common and so are fig trees. The picture here is of Israelites living in peace and not having to deal with war anymore. We have to admit, all of this seems like some sort of impossible fantasy, given the hatred much of the world has of Israel. Let's face it, it would literally required God to intervene in order for that much change to occur there and occur permanently.
 - b) It's like Micah is saying, "Yes things are bad and things are going to get worse, but still we should trust in God because He will win in the end. We can "bank on it"."
 - c) OK John, why should I believe all of this "pie in the sky" stuff? How do we know Micah didn't just write this to make His fellow Israelites feel better? For starters, He correctly described Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians about a hundred years before it happened. One way we know the bible is God's word is because it accurately predicts history long before it ever occurs. It's like saying God's got a 100% track record of being right so far, so why do we doubt Him about telling us what the future holds one day for all of us?
 - d) Suppose you are thinking, what if this doesn't happen for another 1,000 years? Why do I have to think about this now when I've got other issues to deal with? Again, the issue's to put our lives in perspective of human history. It's all about having a good attitude about how life is supposed to be lived. As I love to state, the greatest purpose we can ever have for this life is to use it to make a difference for God. We will win one day, so accept it and use our lives to work toward that goal.
 - e) Anyway, Micah is saying, despite the destruction coming to Israel in his day, despite all of the threats Israel faces today, a day of peace is coming where people can relax at home, as a time is coming of God's peace. I realize a lot of people think this only refers to "peace of mind" that God rules over the world. I'm also positive it's literal for those of us trusting in His literal return to realize He will win in the end.
17. Verse 5: All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.
- a) Speaking of things being permanent, Micah is making that point here as well. He's saying that other nations believe in their "gods", but "THE" God will rule forever.

- b) This is about "betting on the right horse". The reason 30% of the bible is predictions, is so we know for sure trusting in the right religion (the true God) for eternity. Stop and think of all the false religions that have come and gone through history. In Micah's day, the fear was being conquered by nearby empires and living under the rule of false gods. Israel still exists today while those nations that lived under other gods are long gone.
 - c) OK John, a majority of people in this world are not Christians. Muslims, Buddhists, and a few others make up a majority. How do we know we're on the winning team? Because no other "holy book" writes history in advance to validate itself as God's word. I'm sure most religions teach us how to live a good life. What separates the true God from false one's is the ability to know the future and state it in advance to validate it as they word of God.
 - d) I know I'm getting on a role "preaching to the choir", but just as Micah is telling Israelites that they as a people will win in the end, so we as Christians can have faith based on all of this evidence that the God we worship will win in the end. That's the confidence we have with the Spirit of God living within us to guide us to understand His truth.
 - e) Meanwhile, I've still got a bunch of verses left to cover. Let's get back at it.
18. Verse 6: "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief. ⁷ I will make the lame a remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.
- a) Keep in mind why Micah is writing this in the first place. He is writing to Israelites who'll go into captivity within a generation or two. It's saying, "This is not the end. God still has a wonderful plan for our nation. Despite whatever suffering we have to go through in our life, it's worth it as God will resurrect us to eternal life with Him ruling over the world as He will "set up shop" in Jerusalem one day."
 - b) So won't it be really crowded there if multitudes of people are resurrected? That's why I like talking about people living in more than three dimensions. All I'm saying is crowds won't be a problem in that future day!
 - c) So why does the text mention the lame? It's "short hand" for saying those who're suffering in this lifetime, will win in the end. The word "lame" refers to someone who doesn't have use of their legs. These two verses essentially say that despite whatever ways we suffer in this lifetime, that'll be nothing compared to eternity for those who trust in God. It's a way of saying those who couldn't physically "walk in the Lord" will be able to walk one day!
 - d) Bottom line is these verses tell us of a future day where God will rule from Mount Zion (a name for the mountain (tall hill) where God's temple will be located in Israel.
 - e) OK John, this is all well and God and most of us believe Jesus will return one day to rule in a way as describe here. How does any of that affect my life here and now? It is so we keep we keep our eye on the goal. It's to remind us that the purpose of life is to for us to make a difference for Jesus "before He sets up shop" as I've said a lot in this lesson.
19. Verse 8: As for you, O watchtower of the flock, O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem."
- a) While Micah is on a role describing the wonderful eternal future of the Nation of Israel, he turns his focus on the capital city, Jerusalem. When Micah was alive, Israel was split into two nations. The Southern Kingdom had Jerusalem as it's capital. What Micah's saying is a day will come where Israel will be united as a single country again and Jerusalem is "it" so deal with it!
 - b) Keep in mind that Micah predicted in the last chapter the fall of Jerusalem. Therefore it's a bit strange to not only say it'll be inhabited again, but it will be the center of the world.
 - c) Jerusalem today is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Millions of Christians and Jewish people travel there. However, over and above being the capital of the nation of Israel today and a historical famous city, Micah is saying it'll be much more than that. He's implying a king that will rule over the whole world will be based out of that city and that rule will be eternal.

- d) Now if that isn't a great reason to be pro-Israel, I don't know what is. I don't know when this will happen. I just know as positive as I am that history occurred exactly as predicted by God's prophets, so the "future history" will also occur as God says it will.
 - e) Remember that God doesn't call Christians to "speed up" that event. We can't go there to build a temple and say, "OK Jesus, here it is, come on down and let's get the show going!" God's will, will be done on His timing. While we pray for His will to be done, it's still His will to get done on His timing.
 - f) So why does Micah refer to Jerusalem as, "The daughter of Jerusalem"? and the daughter of Zion (a nickname for Israel)? Remember he's predicting Jerusalem will be destroyed as a city and the land of Israel will be essentially empty of Israelites. That's why he uses this type of language. It's like saying, "what will be destroyed will be rebuilt again and those who will be kicked out of this city will see their descendants return here one day". Yes it's what literally happened several times in Israel's history.
20. Verse 9: Why do you now cry aloud-- have you no king? Has your counselor perished, that pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor?
- a) The next few verses focus on Israel "present tense" when Micah was alive. His message is essentially, "Hey all you Israelites, there is still a king on the throne. There are still people you turn to for spiritual advice. Why do you worry about the future? Micah's comparing Israel's pain to a woman in labor. The idea is yes, the pain hurts, but it is only temporary. I am not denying labor pains are not real. I'm just saying it only lasts until the baby does come out. Think of my lesson title, "The really bad news and the really good news". The really bad news is Israel's destruction. The really good news is it's restoration with God sending His Messiah to come rule over the world from a restored Israel.
 - b) OK John, we know all of this and us fellow Christians accept it as true. Why should we be focusing on this stuff? To remember that whatever pain we go through in this life, is also like "labor pains" as it won't last forever. Yes that pain is real and of course we must deal with whatever problems we face. Just like Israel's collective "pain" is not forever, so our pain is not forever either.
21. Verse 10: Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued. There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies.
- a) At the time Micah wrote, the Assyrian Empire was the "big bad boys on the block". They were the one's conquering cities, separating and relocating survivors hundreds of miles away from they lived. Babylon was a large city that was part of the Assyrian Empire but not it's own empire. Micah is saying the city of Babylon will rise to power for a time, as it will conquer the Assyrian Empire, form it's own empire and destroy the Southern Israelite Kingdom. Both Babylon and the Assyrian capital (Nineveh) were based out of "Iraq". The city of Babylon still exists today, but it is mostly ruins. Saddam Hussein did spend a lot of money rebuilding that city before he was killed in 2006. I hold the view that Babylon as a city will have a literal role in "the" end times, but we'll see if that comes to pass.
 - b) Anyway here's Micah predicting a century before Babylon rose to power that the Israelites living in the Southern Kingdom will go (against their will) to Babylon. The text says they will camp in the "open field". That's about prisoner relocation. The key point is just as the Israelites will go into captivity there, so God will redeem them and bring them back to the same piece of real estate. If you think that's no big deal, realize that no other nation in the history of the world has ever been conquered, scattered and came back again to form the same nation. Israel's done it twice in history!
 - c) I admit that I always like to tell people that if you doubt the bible is God's word, go study the history of Israel. That alone is great proof that the bible is God's word. It tells us with great accuracy the history of that nation let alone the promises made about Jesus in both the Old and New Testament as He will rule over this world.

22. Verse 11: But now many nations are gathered against you. They say, "Let her be defiled, let our eyes gloat over Zion!"¹² But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, he who gathers them like sheaves to the threshing floor.
- a) Hopefully by now, you see the pattern. Things are going to go badly now, but God will win in the end. One has to admit Verse 11 could be written today. I keep thinking of all the nations that vow to destroy Israel. The official political party of the Palestinians has as part of their charter, the destruction of Israel. Iran regularly shouts death to Israel. All I'm saying is the world hasn't changed much. The idea of Israel's existence causes pure hatred today as it did back then. The big however, such nations don't realize God's eternal plans for that nation. Those who gloat now will suffer eternally.
 - b) So are you saying nothing modern Israel does is wrong? Of course not. I'm just saying if the God I worship is Pro-Israel, and I want to be on the winning side, I'm pro-Israel. If the bible tells us that Jesus will rule the world one day from Jerusalem, then I'm pro-Israel. It is nothing more complicated than that.
 - c) I'm reminded of a classic saying that goes, the biggest mistake the Jewish people make is their failure to realize Jesus is their long sought Messiah. The biggest mistake Christians make is their failure to realize we worship a Jewish God! Anyway, now that I've put all of us down, I can finish this chapter.
23. Verse 13: "Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion, for I will give you horns of iron; I will give you hoofs of bronze and you will break to pieces many nations." You will devote their ill-gotten gains to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.
- a) I'm the first to admit, Verse 13 is full of strange idioms. Let me see if I can explain it. The text is addressed to the "Daughter of Zion". That just means Verse 13 isn't addressed to all of the Israelites destined for captivity. It's saying the descendants of those Israelites going into captivity will win in the long run.
 - b) To say, "horns of iron and hoofs of bronze" is implying the Israelites "then" will be strong and tough on their foes. Animals horns are used for attacking. An iron hoof means their attack of their enemies will be strong. Hoofs are animal's feet. To refer to them as bronze means their "dig their toes in" and have victory over their enemies. Then the last line says whatever gain is gotten by the capture of the Israelites will end up belonging to God after Israel (with God's help) will defeat their enemies.
 - c) The point again to you and me is "Israel will win in the end". Despite all of the empires as well as other nations that have done harm to God's people, they will win in the end. As I love to say, "If we can't trust God's unconditional promises to Israel, how can we trust His unconditional promise to resurrect us to everlasting life based on our trust in Jesus as God for our salvation.
 - d) Like I said, Chapter 4 is the really good news. When we get to Chapter 4 in the next lesson that good news continues as we'll read of the promises made about Jesus coming into the world and we'll see how Jesus specifically fulfilled those promises. In the meantime, it is time to close in prayer.
24. Let's pray: Father, we read about the bad news and good news that the Israelites will suffer in this world, and we realize those good and bad promises apply to us as well. Yes we live by Your grace, but suffering is a part of life. However joy is a choice. Help us to focus on the good news of Your promises to us so we can have joy in our lives as we use them for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.