

Micah - Chapter 7:14-20 - Prayer for Deliverance and Praise for Forgiveness

Here we are at the end of Micah!

And I just want to say I think that this has been a really good study.
And thank you to everyone who has taught, and to everyone who has participated!

Sadly the minor prophets are pretty much ignored within the church today.
But I think it's important that we give them due attention. Not because the prophets speak to us directly, but because they tell us so much about God's overarching plan. And as we see that, we come to know God's ways, and ultimately, we come to know God.

Part of the reason that people ignore the prophets is because they don't understand them.
And the *reason* people don't understand them is largely because they have confused the Church with Israel.

When you try to say that the Church and Israel are the same thing, as the covenant theologians do, you are left with a *huge* interpretive problem!

Scripture gets really nonsensical really fast!
Think about it. How can you reconcile being *under* the law, and *dead* to the law at the same time.

You also have to try to explain how the OT promises of God to Israel really aren't what they sound like. "They won't be fulfilled literally! No! They're being fulfilled in a '*spiritual sense*' to the Church."

Well, I'm sorry, but with that kind of interpretation, you not only call God's character into question, but you make the Bible *very* difficult to interpret. (Impossible)
You're basically beginning with the assumption that, *whatever it means*, it doesn't mean what you think it means.

I kid you not, I was listening to a reformed guy on a podcast the other day and he said that, "To the dispensational mind, if God makes a promise, he has to keep it."
Implying what? That we shouldn't expect God to keep His promises!

And so it's no wonder that so many Christians come to a book like Micah and get confused!

I know that for me personally, before I began to understand the distinction between Israel and the Church, the Old Testament prophets made almost no sense to me.

When Micah wrote these words, God had not yet revealed the Church.

And so everything in the book of Micah relates to the nation Israel. And if we try to force the Church into it, we're going to majorly distort the meaning.

If we can keep that distinction clear, and if we can keep in mind the broad brushstrokes of God's plan for Israel, then the Old Testament is not that hard to understand.

And as dispensationalists, we have (at least we should have) clarity on those things. And that enables us to look at a book like Micah and actually understand it!

Maybe not in every little detail, but we at least have a solid understanding of most of it. So never be embarrassed about being a dispensationalist!

So, let's just review the core components of God's plan for Israel.

It all has to do with God's covenants with Israel. That's the framework within which we interpret the OT Scripture.

- 1) **In the Abrahamic Covenant**, God has promised to ultimately and unconditionally bless the nation Israel with earthly material blessings in the physical land of Abraham's sojournings. (And to bless the nations of the world through Israel.) (Gen 12-17)
- 2) **At Mount Sinai**, God gave Israel the Mosaic Law Covenant as a governing rule of life. The law was never intended to be a means of justification. Instead, the law conditioned blessings upon obedience to the law and promised cursings on those who broke it. (Ex 19:5-8)
- 3) **The New Covenant**. This one hasn't begun yet. God promises to make this covenant with Israel in the future. The New Covenant guarantees God's blessing for Israel through the provision of a new heart, His Spirit, and writing the Law on their hearts. (Jer 31, Ez 36)

Keeping these three main covenants in mind helps us interpret the entire Old Testament, (as well the rest of the Bible for that matter).

As you read the Old Testament, you'll see how each passage is connected in some way with these covenants.

If it's a passage about cursing for disobedience and blessing for obedience, that is related to the Mosaic covenant.

And we've seen plenty of that in the book of Micah.

But what we will also see in the prophets is that they will ultimately circle back to God's promise of unconditional blessing for Israel. And of course, that has to do with the Abrahamic covenant and the promised New covenant.

You'll often see this brought out toward the end of a prophetic book.
And that's exactly what we see here at the close of Micah. So this is a wonderful passage!

Verses 14 - 20

Micah 7:14-20 (NASB)

¹⁴ Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, The flock of Your possession Which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead As in the days of old.

¹⁵ "As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles."

¹⁶ Nations will see and be ashamed Of all their might. They will put *their* hand on *their* mouth, Their ears will be deaf.

¹⁷ They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To the LORD our God they will come in dread And they will be afraid before You.

¹⁸ Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

²⁰ You will give truth to Jacob *And* unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.

Now, before we get into any of this text, notice the last verse, the very closing words of this whole book. (verse 20)

Who are the people named there?

It says that God swore to **Abraham** and **Jacob**, who are the **forefathers** of Israel.

What is that a reference to?

This is talking about the Abrahamic covenant. (Which was first given to Abraham and then confirmed to Isaac and Jacob.)

So, that's the way we use the Biblical covenants as an interpretive key to the OT.

If we know what God's covenants with Israel are, then they just leap off the page at us.

So, what we're looking at in this closing passage is all based on the Abrahamic Covenant. Not the Mosaic!

Now let's begin in verse 14.

Verse 14

¹⁴ Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, The flock of Your possession Which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead As in the days of old.

Notice that this is a prayer. These words are directed toward God.

And this is in the imperative.

So Micah is praying that God would come and shepherd the nation Israel.

And this is a wonderful thing to pray, because God has promised to do it.

We saw that promise back in 5 verse 4.

And now Micah's prayer is based on that promise. (Turn back to 5:4)

(We should do the same thing in our prayers. Those things that God has promised us in Scripture are wonderful things to pray for. Think of Romans 8:28-29 :Lord, I know that you have promised to conform me to the image of your Son Jesus. Thank you that You will use every circumstance to accomplish that purpose.)

So, let's read the promise that Micah is looking back to.

Micah 5:4 (NASB)

⁴ And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.

So this is talking about the Messiah Jesus Christ coming and ruling Israel as their "shepherd King."

And Micah is anticipating the fulfillment of this in his prayer.

Q: What is a "shepherd king"?

What does it mean to shepherd a people?

Does anybody have the King James or the ASV?

If you do, what you'll find is that this word shepherd is translated "feed your people..." (in both 5:4 and 7:14)

And I have to admit, that caught my attention. Because if you've ever farmed livestock, you know that the number one thing you do is FEED them.

The Hebrew word here can refer to either shepherding or feeding. That's because feeding the sheep is pretty much a shepherd's job description.

In Micah's day, that would mean leading the sheep out to graze every single day.

But of course, it also means more than that.

If you take the sheep out of the fold and you take them out into the fields to shepherd them, now all of a sudden they are vulnerable to predators...

And so, pasturing sheep also requires that you protect them from danger.

Really, the basic idea of the Shepherd King of Israel is that Jesus will rule Israel with genuine care and compassion for the needs and wellbeing of the nation Israel.

Q:So what does it mean that the flock will dwell in "a fruitful field" feeding in Bashan and Gilead?

The word behind "fruitful field" is actually the word "Carmel."

And if we take a look at these three areas, Carmel Bashan and Gilead, we realized that these are the best grazing lands in the whole land of Israel.

Carmel is over in the area of Mt. Carmel near the Mediterranean was also known as very good grazing land. In 1 Samuel 25 we see that this is where Nabal was a sheep rancher. And it says that Nabal was "a very rich" man. So apparently he had done very well raising sheep in this area.

In Song of Solomon 7:5, Solomon compliments his bride by saying,

Your head crowns you like Carmel, And the flowing locks of your head are like purple threads; [The] king is captivated by [your] tresses. Sng 7:5

Now Bashan and Gilead were a large area on the eastern side of the Jordan where Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh received their inheritance.

And if we look in Numbers 32, we see that they intentionally requested this land because it was well suited to livestock, and because these tribes had very large numbers of livestock they asked if they could receive this land in particular as their inheritance. (Num 32:1-4, 33)

Over in Amos 4:1 we see this comment about the upper class women of Samaria.

Amos 4:1 (NASB)

¹ Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!"

You know what Amos is calling these women when he calls them "cows of Bashan?"

He's calling them FAT COWS!

The fattest and best fed livestock came from Bashan. (Amos was a sheep herder, he knew all about it!)

Anyway, I think we've got the point that this is all talking about the best grazing land in Israel.

If you were a shepherd, this is where you would really like to feed your sheep.

So, coming back to verse 14, what is the point?

This is speaking about the nation Israel. And this is a word picture.

When Jesus returns to reign over Israel, they will be like a flock of sheep in Bashan or Gilead.

This doesn't mean that the entire nation, Israel, will only live in the geographic areas of Bashan and Gilead.

Israel's Kingdom will extend from the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the Euphrates River.

What this pictures, is the abundance and prosperity of the nation Israel in the whole promised land.

But it also speaks of total peace and safety. That's what the "scepter" or "rod" has to do with.

So we see that Jesus will not only provide prosperity for Israel, but he will also provide them security.

Notice the closing line at the end of verse 14, "**as in the days of old.**"

Remember, this is written in Micah's time and he's already talking about Israel's time of prosperity as *history*.

And when was Israel's greatest time of prosperity? Can anyone tell me?

- We'd have to say it was during the reign of King Solomon, David's son.

And Micah is writing this about 200 years later.

And now we live an additional 2700 years later. And God hasn't yet fulfilled this promise to Israel, but He will.

We read in 2 Peter 3:9

2 Peter 3:9 (NASB)

⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Verse 15

Micah is continuing to talk about this future time when Jesus Christ will shepherd the nation Israel in the Kingdom, and he says that it will be, “*as* the days when you came out from the land of Egypt.” (By the way this verse is the word of the Lord. God is speaking in the first person.)

¹⁵ "As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles."

So now, Micah is reaching back even earlier in Israel's history. Past the time of Israel's prosperity under Solomon, and he is looking at God's miraculous deliverance and provision for the nation of Israel when he brought them out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness.

And it's really interesting here to compare the future Kingdom with Israel's exodus from Egypt. This is going to lead right into verses 16 and 17 here.

We know that when God brought Israel out of Egypt, He did it in such a powerful way that the news of it spread to all the surrounding Gentile nations. “With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” (Deut 4:34)

And then for the next 40 years, they watched as God provided for the nation Israel in a desert wilderness.

What are some of the “miracles” that God performed for Israel as they wandered around the wilderness?

- Food (Manna) (Ex 16:35)
- Water (Ex 15:25; 17:6; Num 20:8)
- Clothing (Deut 29:5)

Not to mention the fact that God's glory was visibly present with the nation Israel that entire time.

And the result of all this is that the Canaanite nations were totally defeated psychologically. They were terrified of this God of Israel. They had no strength left in them.

And this is parallel to what God will do for Israel once again through the Tribulation and into the Kingdom.

God is going to miraculously preserve the remnant of Israel with a mighty arm, and then He will bring them into the Kingdom where He will supernaturally provide for them.

And we also know that the visible glory of the Lord be above Jerusalem again! (Isaiah 4:5)

And we're going to see in verses 16 and 17 that the effect on the gentile nations in that day will be very similar.

Verse 16 & 17

¹⁶ Nations will see and be ashamed Of all their might. They will put *their* hand on *their* mouth, Their ears will be deaf.

¹⁷ They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To the LORD our God they will come in dread And they will be afraid before You.

Notice the parallel between those verses and the way the Canaanites responded when they saw the Exodus.

Joshua 2:11 (NASB) (Rahab's words)

"When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Now, as we said, this whole passage is describing Jesus Kingdom rule on the earth. And I think this would be a good time to clear up something that can be a bit of a confusion.

Sometimes we have a tendency to use the terms "kingdom" and "millenium" interchangeably. We hear the term "millennial kingdom" a lot in dispensational circles.

And there's nothing wrong with that term.

But we have to be clear that the Millennium is not the same thing as the Kingdom.

The Millennium is only the first phase of the Kingdom which is ETERNAL.

Isaiah 9:7 (NASB)

There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore...

Daniel 2:44 (NASB)

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

But it's somewhat common to talk about the millennial Kingdom as if the Millennium is if the kingdom will only last for 1000 years.

And then sometimes we say that the Millennial Kingdom is followed by "the eternal state."

And while there are definitely some significant changes at the end of the Millennium (A New Heavens and New Earth!), that is ***not the end*** of Jesus' eternal Kingdom!

The kingdom continues on the New Earth throughout all eternity!

This is the consistent teaching of the entire Bible.

Why do I bother getting into all of this?

It's because there are some distinct differences in conditions between the first 1000 years of the Kingdom and the eternal Kingdom.

If you don't know which phase we're looking at, then verses like this can be confused.

The *eternal* Kingdom will be a time of perfect peace on the earth. But this “trembling in dread and fear and licking the dust” doesn't fit that picture.

We have to understand that this is a description of the conditions that will exist during the first thousand years of the kingdom, *not* on into the eternal kingdom.

This passage has Jesus ruling on the earth, but it certainly doesn't depict perfect peace and harmony. (And that is the sort of strange nature of the Millennium.)

Here we see gentile nations who have been devastated by God's wrath in the tribulation. They are prostrated before king Jesus, but they're not too excited about Him. Instead, they are terrified!

What's interesting is that this is partially a quote from a prayer of King David when his enemies had been subdued and his kingdom had been established.

2 Samuel 22:45-46 (NASB)

⁴⁵ "Foreigners pretend obedience to me; As soon as they hear, they obey me.

⁴⁶ "Foreigners lose heart, And come trembling out of their fortresses.

So we see this feigned obedience or as John Darby translated it, “cringing.”

So there's a direct parallel between the enemy nations that David subdued when he established his kingdom, and the nations that Jesus will subdue when He establishes His kingdom.

There's *obedience*, but it's a *feigned* obedience.

I mean, what other choice do they have!?

This is the One who just overthrew the entire global Satanic kingdom, and destroyed the antichrist and his armies with the word of His mouth!

These Gentile opponents will be kept in this subdued state until the end of the Millennium, when Satan is released for a little while and they will take their final stand against Jesus Christ.

And of course, it's at this point that these enemies will be judged once and for all at the Great White Throne Judgment. (Rev 20)

Having spoken about the Messiah's subjugation of the hostile nations, Micah begins to glorify God for His faithfulness and lovingkindness toward Israel.

Verse 18

Let's look at verse 18.

¹⁸ Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

What is Micah saying here?

When Micah says that God "*pardons*" Israel's iniquity and "*passes over*" their rebellious act, **does this mean** that God just sweeps Israel's sin under the carpet?

NO! Why not?

What is God's attribute that won't allow Him to do that? (**His *justice!***)

So we have this tension set up between God's justice and His love and compassion.

On the one hand, God's righteousness demands justice.

On the other hand, God's love compels Him to extend love to hostile sinners.

So how is that tension resolved?

What single act completely satisfied both sides of that equation?

(*At the cross!*)

That's where both God's wrath against sin and his love for mankind are perfectly expressed.

That apparent tension between God's justice and His love is never solved by diminishing those attributes. God doesn't have to soften his justice in order to be loving. And he doesn't cease being loving when he exercises justice.

The cross not only answers this apparent tension, but it goes further. It *magnifies* both God's justice *and* His love!

The cross is God's answer to sin for all men; Jews and Gentiles.

When Israel sinned and broke God's covenant with him, He wasn't up there wringing his hands, wondering what he was going to do about it. He already knew!

And so He could be at rest about it all. He could be *patient* with them

And that's what Micah is expressing in verse 18:

Not lenience toward sin, but *patience* toward sinners!

God is patiently extending His mercy towards a stubborn nation.

Romans 10:21 (NASB)

²¹ But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."

And He does this because of His lovingkindness. He wants to give every possible opportunity to respond to His lovingkindness.

And that word translated "lovingkindness," is the Hebrew word "hesed."

And the best way I have heard to think of this word is to understand it as "*covenant faithfulness*."

God has entered into a covenantal relationship with the nation Israel, and He will remain faithful to His covenant promises.

But Israel has to respond by faith.

And so, He is patient toward Israel. In order to give them every opportunity to respond.

And that is all based on the cross!

If it wasn't for the cross, God could never extend this blessing to Israel.

Verse 19

Notice that verse 19 answers to what we've been saying about verse 18.

It's not that God sweeps Israel's sin under that carpet. But He deals with it! He actually does something about it!

¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

Again, where does this happen?

This is fulfilled on the cross!

It's on the cross that Israel's sin was being cast into the depths of the sea!

And even though the Roman cross had never been heard of in Micah's day, the fact that the Messiah would be a substitute sacrifice for sins was clearly revealed.

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

And the cross wasn't just for Israel's sins, but the sins of *every single person who has ever lived!*

1 John 2:2 (NASB)

² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.

And that funny word propitiation means "the satisfaction."

Jesus' death on the cross perfectly satisfied the Father concerning the sins of the whole world.

And so, God extends grace to all mankind on the basis of the cross.

And the only way for anyone to receive the benefits of that satisfactory work is to rest by faith in it!

But here in Micah, we're talking specifically about the nation Israel. And we're talking about the promised blessings under the Abrahamic covenant.

And what we have to understand is that though Christ died for the sins of the entire nation, only those who receive that gift by faith will ever enter into the promised kingdom.

John 3:3 (NASB) Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

And how is a person born again? (That was Nicodemus' question right?)

John 3:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴ "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

Now remember that Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus well before the Church began.

After the Church began, any Jewish person who puts their faith in Christ becomes a part of the Church and a citizen of heaven. (Which is a much higher blessing and privilege.)

But for the Jews before the Church age, it was all about entrance into the Kingdom.

On what basis can any Israelite hope to enter into the promised Kingdom?

And what Jesus taught very clearly is that the only way that the Jews would enter into the promised kingdom was by means of His cross work. They would have to put their faith in Him as the one who paid their sin penalty in their place.

And though the cross isn't mentioned in verse 19, the *work* of the cross is!
This verse speaks to the fact that Israel's sins would be dealt with once and for all.

The only thing necessary on their part was to rest their faith in the fact that God would do this!

Verse 20

And then we come back to our closing verse, which we already commented on briefly.

²⁰ You will give truth to Jacob *And* unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.

With Israel, everything goes back to God's faithfulness to His unconditional covenant promise of blessing.

God swore by his own name to bless the nation Israel. And He will do it!

Hebrews 6:13-14 (NASB)

¹³ For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU."

God stakes His entire reputation on fulfilling His covenant with Israel!

And so there's no question, God *will* keep His promise!

Are there any questions about today's verses?