



Hope Found

Hope is found in God's promised salvation to those who trust Him.

MICAH 7:1-10,18-20

Most of us grow impatient when told to wait. We use apps so we can skip the ordering line. We pay additional fees for the freedom to skip a line at a theme park. Micah wrote to a nation that had waited year after year for the coming of a Messiah who would right the wrongs of the world and bring salvation to the people of God. They needed to realize that hope was found in God's promise of salvation to those who trust Him. They needed to hold on to faith and live in anticipation of the day God would deliver them.

What are things for which you do not mind waiting? What are things for which you despise waiting?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

MICAH 6:1–7:20

Chapters 6–7 contain Micah’s final message. It begins with the imagery of a lawsuit brought by God against His people (Mic. 6:1-16). They had violated God’s covenant. Witnesses were called in, evidence was presented against the accused, a defense was given, and a verdict was reached. Micah called upon the mountains, hills, and foundations of the earth to bear witness to the Lord’s case. It is fitting they were called upon to bear witness to Israel’s violations of its covenant with the Lord given the heavens and the earth were called upon to be witnesses to the ratification of this covenant when God initially made it with Israel (see Deut. 4:26; 32:1).

After calling His witnesses, God initiated His case against Israel by recounting His faithfulness to Israel. He had delivered them from bondage in Egypt, provided them with godly leaders, protected them from their enemies, and made a way for them to enter the promised land. Instead of keeping their covenant with the Lord by acting justly, loving Him faithfully, and walking with Him in humility, they thought they could appease Him simply by offering an abundant amount of sacrifices (Mic. 6:4-8). Their sins were so glaring that there was no defense to be made. The Lord reminded them of the curses He promised to bring upon Israel for breaking its covenant with Him, declaring they were about to happen now (6:14-15; see Deut. 28:38-40).

Micah’s message ended with a lament (Mic. 7:1-6), then a message of hope as he looked beyond the present to the future when the Lord would restore His covenant people (7:7-13). He concluded with a prayer extolling God’s power, forgiveness, lovingkindness, and loyalty to Abraham, Jacob, and all of their descendants (7:14-20).

Read Micah 7:1-10,18-20, noting how God revealed His compassion, forgiveness, and faithfulness to His people. What role does trust in God play in receiving God’s compassion?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REALITY DEFINED (MICAH 7:1-6)

¹ How sad for me! For I am like one who — when the summer fruit has been gathered after the gleaning of the grape harvest — finds no grape cluster to eat, no early fig, which I crave. ² Faithful people have vanished from the land; there is no one upright among the people. All of them wait in ambush to shed blood; they hunt each other with a net. ³ Both hands are good at accomplishing evil: the official and the judge demand a bribe; when the powerful man communicates his evil desire, they plot it together. ⁴ The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is worse than a hedge of thorns. The day of your watchmen, the day of your punishment, is coming; at this time their panic is here. ⁵ Do not rely on a friend; don't trust in a close companion. Seal your mouth from the woman who lies in your arms. ⁶ Surely a son considers his father a fool, a daughter opposes her mother, and a daughter-in-law is against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household.

VERSES 1-4

As a prophet, Micah was surely discouraged by the lack of spiritual vitality among the people of God. He lamented the fact that *faithful people* had *vanished from the land*. He was like a person searching for grapes and figs after the *summer fruit* has been gathered. The summer fruit represented the last harvest of the year in Israel. Workers scoured the fields for every edible and useful piece of produce, meaning that one who came behind them would find little of value. Righteous people were hard to find among the people of God.

After lamenting the absence of the righteous, Micah delineated both the public and private sins of the people. The people are described as *waiting in ambush to shed blood* and hunting each other with a net. In other words, they were self-absorbed, immersed in their own wants and needs no matter what it took to achieve them. The words *both hands* describe skilled labor. However, they were not skilled at being helpful or doing good. Rather, they were skilled at *accomplishing evil*. Specifically, the politicians and judges were skilled

at taking a **bribe**. They did not act in the interest of justice but in their own self-interest. They were like a **brier** or **hedge of thorns** that pricked everyone who came to them. People came to them for help but left bruised and bleeding.

The two expressions, **the day of your watchmen** and **the day of your punishment**, refer to the same thing. Watchmen were posted on the walls and in watchtowers as lookouts for invading armies. Israel's prophets often saw themselves as watchmen for the people, warning the nation of God's impending judgment if they refused to repent. Even though Israel ignored these prophetic messengers of God, once again God graciously sent Micah to warn the people of judgment. The day was fast approaching when Israel's watchmen on the walls and in the watchtowers would see armies coming to invade the land. These armies would be God's instruments of judgment.

VERSES 5-6

Friends could not trust friends. Husbands could not trust wives. Parents could not trust their own children. Micah said, **a man's enemies are the men of his own household**. Families were collapsing. Homes were disintegrating. In Jesus's call to discipleship in Matthew 10:35-36, He quoted Micah 7:6 to demonstrate how He came to bring a sword rather than peace. The gospel itself will divide friends and family who fall on opposite sides. But in Micah's day, families were falling apart not because of the gospel but because of the lack of gospel. Society was caught in a cycle of sin, and judgment was coming because of their sin.

Before a person can long for salvation, he must be aware of his sin. Before a church can seek revival, it must acknowledge what has caused the need for that revival. Micah evaluated the situation and defined reality in his day. People often move too quickly toward possible solutions without stopping to define reality.

How does knowing the magnitude of one's sin push a person to lament his or her disobedience?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Read Leviticus 26:33-45 and Deuteronomy 29:25-30:5. Considering these passages, how does Micah's prophecy demonstrate the consistency and faithfulness of God to keep His promises? What does the time frame from when Moses warned Israel to when Micah warned Israel reveal about the kindness and patience of God?

SALVATION DISCOVERED (MICAH 7:7-10)

⁷ But I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. ⁸ Do not rejoice over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will stand up; though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. ⁹ Because I have sinned against him, I must endure the LORD's fury until he champions my cause and establishes justice for me. He will bring me into the light; I will see his salvation. ¹⁰ Then my enemy will see, and she will be covered with shame, the one who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will look at her in triumph; at that time she will be trampled like mud in the streets.

VERSES 7-10

The previous verses presented gloom and doom, but the mood changed in verse 7. Micah turned from complaint to confidence. He refused to succumb to despair. The prophet was able to look past the coming destruction in the immediate future to a day of hope when God would deliver His people.

Micah began his turn toward hope by speaking from the point of view of the remnant in Zion. The remnant called out to their **enemy** not to **rejoice** over them in their **fallen** state. David expressed this same sentiment as he faced his battles (Ps. 30:1).

The remnant expressed hope that they would one day **stand up** again. Even though they would **sit in darkness**, one day the Lord would be their **light**. Notice that the Lord was not bringing light; He Himself was the light.

In verse 9, the remnant acknowledged their sin again, and they acknowledged they must face **the LORD's fury** for their own sin. But God would champion their cause. He would come to their rescue, establishing **justice** and bringing them **into the light**. Punishment would occur but would only be for a season. Micah and the remnant confidently declared they would **see his salvation**.

For these reasons, Micah's confident pronouncement in verse 7 was that he would **look to the LORD** and **wait for the God of my salvation**. He confidently declared, **my God will hear me**. The use of the pronoun *my* twice in this verse indicates the personal relationship the prophet and the remnant had with their God. He was not some impersonal god who impulsively meted out justice. He was a God invested in their lives and wellbeing. The idea of waiting on God involved trust. We wait for those things we trust. If we believe a bus is coming soon, we will wait at the bus stop. But when we lack trust that the bus driver will keep his appointed schedule, we look for alternate methods of transportation. Micah waited because He trusted God in the process.

How is waiting an expression of faith in God?

Jesus was the hope to which Micah looked.

When God came to deliver His remnant, their enemies would be **covered with shame**. Those who taunted the people of God and gloated over their demise would one day be **trampled like mud in the streets**. This is the same punishment meted out to Assyria for its role in conquering the people of Israel, even though they were fulfilling their God-appointed role to mete out justice to Israel because of its sin (Isa. 10:6).

Though Israel faced some difficult days ahead, Micah looked to the time when God would bring salvation, beginning with the first coming of the Messiah and culminating in the second coming of the Messiah. Jesus was the hope to which Micah looked. He continued to trust God for salvation and a day in the future when the Lord would deliver those who remained faithful to Him.

FORGIVENESS CELEBRATED (MICAH 7:18-20)

¹⁸ Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity and passing over rebellion for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not hold on to his anger forever because he delights in faithful love. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us; he will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ You will show loyalty to Jacob and faithful love to Abraham, as you swore to our ancestors from days long ago.

VERSES 18-20

The name *Micah* means “who is like the Lord,” and the prophet played off his own name to wrap up his prophecy with some of the most encouraging words of the entire book. He asked the question, ***Who is a God like you?*** This is a rhetorical question that demanded the answer, “No one!” The God of Israel was incomparable to any other god that people worship.

The Lord is incomparable in His forgiveness. In verses 18-20, Micah used four different words for sin and four different verbs for forgiveness. God forgives, passes over, vanquishes, and casts sin away. God does a completely thorough job of forgiving sin. He places sin out of sight (Isa. 38:7). He places it out of reach (Mic. 7:19). He places it out of mind (Jer. 31:34). He places it out of existence (Isa. 43:25). The sins mentioned at the beginning of the final chapter of Micah were great. But Micah understood God’s unchanging character, and his hope was based on God’s willingness and desire to forgive.

The phrase ***passing over rebellion*** is literally “passing over” recalled the action of God in Exodus when He passed over the houses of the Israelites because of the blood applied to their doorposts. The Israelites acted in faith, applying sacrificial blood to the doorposts of their homes. God also passes over our sin as we trust the blood of Jesus to cover our sin (see Heb. 9:14).

Micah also noted that God did not **hold on to his anger forever**. Sin had to be punished, but once sin's judgment was meted, God did not hold a grudge. When the remnant returned after exile, they did not have to worry that God had held on to their sin and kept it as a bribe against them. Neither do we have to worry that God holds on to His anger toward our sin when His wrath has been satisfied by Christ on the cross. God knows how to forgive, and He does so thoroughly.

What problems arise when we trust more in our ability to stop sinning than in God's ability and desire to forgive?

God vanquishes iniquities by casting them **into the depths of the sea**. This action calls to mind another action of God in Exodus. As Pharaoh's army pursued the children of Israel, they crossed the sea on dry land. When they arrived at the other side, God closed the sea and Pharaoh's chariots sunk to the bottom of the sea (Ex. 15:4-5). The God who sinks chariots can also sink our sins into the bottom of the sea where they become out of sight and out of reach.

Why is God such a great forgiver? Micah attributed this to two characteristics. God forgives because He has **compassion**. This is a tender love that God has for His children. God wants to do good, not harm, to His children. He also forgives because of His **loyalty** and **faithful love**. God had made a covenant with His people through **Jacob** and **Abraham**, and God keeps His promises. He promises never to leave or forsake those who are His (Heb. 13:5).

How should a believer respond to God's forgiveness?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father*

God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. (See Deuteronomy 32:6; Romans 8:14-15.)

God “Appointed” in Jonah



By Wayne VanHorn

The book of Jonah is unlike other prophetic books. This book is about the prophet rather than by the prophet. It recounts the story of the historical figure, Jonah, who prophesied in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the eighth century BC. That Jonah was a real person is beyond dispute given the confirmation supplied in 2 Kings 14:25. He

prophesied during the reign of King Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash. Jonah was from the territory of Zebulun and the town of Gath Hopher (Josh. 19:13), which was three miles northeast of Nazareth. During Jonah’s day, the dominant world power was Assyria with its capital in Nineveh. God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh to prophesy against it. Some scholars have doubted whether Nineveh would have repented at the preaching of an obscure Hebrew prophet and have thus called into question the veracity of the biblical account. However, during the early part of the eighth century BC, Assyria was in a state of general decline. Simultaneously, their neighbor to the north, Urartu, was growing in strength. This state of affairs, which was unsettling to the Ninevites, thus prepared the way for Jonah’s poignant message,

“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4b, KJV).

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY DEFINED

The central theme of the book of Jonah is God’s sovereign grace extended to the Gentiles. That Jonah was commissioned to go to the Assyrians, the quintessential symbol of the enemy of God’s people, magnifies the grace of God in His sovereign design to save all who repent of their sins. Simply defined, God’s sovereignty is His ability to do what He wants, when He wants, with, to, and through whom He wants, without meaningful opposition. In the case of the book of Jonah, God wanted the Ninevites to know that judgment for their sins was coming in forty days. The Ninevites recognized the sovereignty of God as indicated by their response to Jonah’s message. When Jonah preached the imminent overthrow of Nineveh, the people repented, fasted, prayed, and sought God’s favor (Jonah 3:5-9). The humble response of these treacherous Gentiles indicated their belief in the sovereign ability of Jonah’s God to bring about the predicted destruction of Nineveh.

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY DEMONSTRATED

God’s sovereignty is demonstrated throughout the story of Jonah. The most significant demonstration in the book of Jonah of God’s sovereignty is in the four incidents that employ the term “appointed.”¹ All four occurrences of the Hebrew term (*m_nâ*) in the book of Jonah depict God’s sovereignty. No clear indication of special creation exists in the book of Jonah, but rather the emphasis is on the created realm being at God’s disposal precisely when and as He needs it. The four “appointments” in Jonah are the great fish (1:17 in English; 2:1 in Hebrew), the gourd plant (4:6), the worm (4:7), and the vehement east wind (4:8). These four appointments demonstrated God’s sovereignty over the realm of animals (the great fish in 1:17; the worm in 4:7), over the plants (the gourd in 4:6), and over the natural forces (the east wind in 4:8). God demonstrated His sovereignty also in the precise timing of having the great fish in place to swallow Jonah before the rebellious prophet drowned at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea. The gourd grew up in a night to shelter him from the hot sun. The worm

attacked the specific gourd plant under which Jonah was sitting, and the hot east wind blew only after the destruction of Jonah's protective shelter. Together with the hot sun, the sultry east wind made Jonah want to die.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY DIRECTED

With the completion of the sovereign appointments in 4:8, the book moves toward its climactic and didactic purpose as God confronted and questioned Jonah in 4:9-11. God's sovereignty, so effectively demonstrated through the four appointments, is now directed toward teaching Jonah (and by extension, postexilic Judah) that God's will is His grace be extended even to the vilest offenders among the Gentiles. Jonah pitied a gourd that he had absolutely nothing to do with in terms of planting it or making it grow. He pitied this plant that came up in a night and perished in a night. The rhetorical question that closes the book (4:11) is intentionally educational. If Jonah had pity for a plant not of his own making, should God not have pity for people whom He did create? The obvious answer is yes! The question is more a theological

statement about international and cross-cultural missions than a query to a weary prophet. God demonstrated His sovereignty over all the created realm and then He directed His sovereignty toward teaching His people about His desire to forgive and to deliver all people, even people like the hated Assyrians.

Jonah's message is one that God's people need to hear and understand today, for the sovereign Lord still loves and seeks to deliver all peoples of the earth. God best demonstrated His sovereign will in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We should join with the apostle Paul in saying, "This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'—and I am the worst of them" (1 Tim. 1:15, CSB). As Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14, KJV).

1. The term is "appointed" (1:17; 4:6-7) in the CSB and ESV; "prepared" in the KJV; and "provided" in the NIV.

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COMING **NEXT QUARTER**

JOHN 1-11

- Session 1* **In the Beginning** • John 1:1-14
- Session 2* **Come and See** • John 1:40-51
- Session 3* **I Will Raise** • John 2:11-23
- Session 4* **You Will Find** • Luke 2:1-15
- Session 5* **Everyone Who Believes** • John 3:4-18
- Session 6* **But Whoever Drinks** • John 4:11-26
- Session 7* **Pick Up Your Mat** • John 5:5-16
- Session 8* **I Am the Bread** • John 6:26-40
- Session 9* **He Sent Me** • John 7:14-29
- Session 10* **I Am the Light** • John 8:3-18
- Session 11* **You Have Seen Him** • John 9:24-38
- Session 12* **I Know My Own** • John 10:7-14,25-30
- Session 13* **I Am the Resurrection** • John 11:32-46

JOHN

Prophets of the Eighth Century



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MINOR PROPHETS

From the outside looking in, things could not have been better for Judah and Israel in the eighth century BC. But economic prosperity and territorial gains were masking moral corruption, idolatry, and social injustice in both kingdoms. In response, God sent prophets like Amos, Jonah, Hosea, and Micah to warn the people judgment was coming. Their message still resonates today: God takes sin seriously, and He will take action to bring individuals and nations back to Him.

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