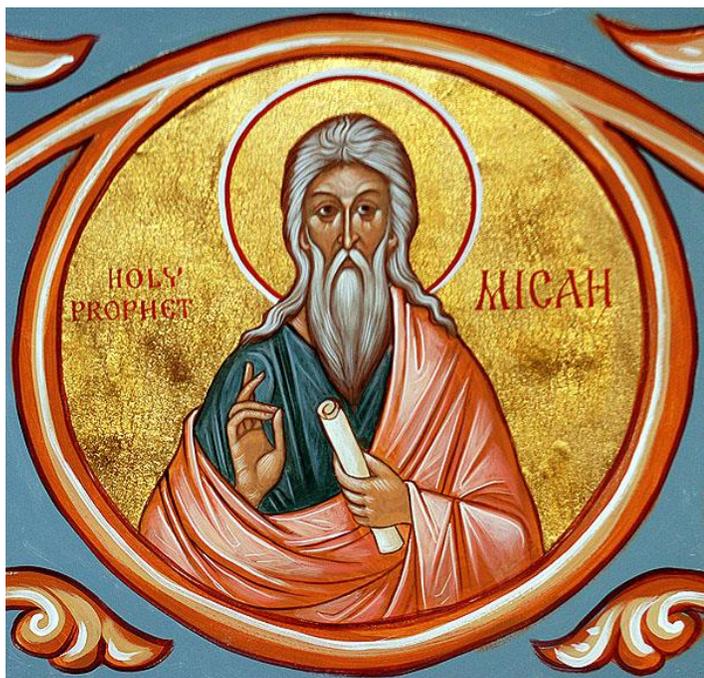


# THE COMING OF CHRIST IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

## *An Anglican Advent Bible Study*

### Micah



#### The Advent Season

- Advent means “coming” or “appearing”
- Advent—though having a *penitential* aspect—is a season for *preparation*: for celebrating Christ’s First Coming and readying ourselves for His Second.
- Advent’s major themes include:
  - Expectation: waiting/making the way for Jesus through prayer, study & personal preparation
  - Hope: looking for the restoration of God’s People and His promise of peace to us/world
  - Joy: celebrating Christ’s Advent and the ongoing presence of His “Interim Coming”
  - Love: sharing affection by spending less time on worldly cares and more on Church & family
- Observing Advent’s Expectation/Anticipation:
  - Advent wreath & calendar
  - *O Antiphons* (“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”)

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The name Micah is a shortened form of the Hebrew word “Mikayahu,” which means “who is like the Eternal?” The word has the same derivation as Michael (the name of the archangel) which means “who is like God?” There seems to be a reference to his name in Micah 7:18: “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity?”

#### **Time setting of Micah**

Micah is designated a “pre-exilic” prophet since he lived sometime between 750 and 686 B.C. during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (1:1; Jer. 26:18). He was therefore a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. However, his prophecy concerns Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, while Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. Although he was a man from the southern kingdom, a great deal of his prophecy had to do with the northern kingdom. Micah predicted the fall of Samaria (1:6), which took place in 722–721. This would place his early ministry in the reigns of Jotham (750–732) and Ahaz (735–715). Micah’s message reflects social conditions prior to the religious reforms under Hezekiah (715–686). Micah’s ministry most likely fell within the period 735–700.

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#### **Micah’s message**

There are several famous passages which are familiar to the average Christian, although he may not recognize them as coming from Micah. Through the gloom of impending judgment, Micah saw clearly the coming glory of the redemption of Israel, which makes this a remarkable book.

Although Micah’s prophecies were from a different vantage point (looking toward the future, not back on the past), his main ideas are similar to Zechariah: 1) Israel/Judah’s sins; 2) their destruction; 3) and their restoration. He warned of an imminent desolation, but a future glory that our Advent season helps us remember.

Micah delivered strong indictments against both Samaria and Jerusalem (Micah 1:4-7). He witnessed idolatry, evil business practices, dishonesty, cheating, bribery and internal strife and corruption. God was not going to allow these sinful practices to continue. Punishment with famine, war and ultimate national captivity would soon descend upon the people unless they responded to the prophet’s warning messages and repented of their

wickedness. The rulers were mostly to blame, as they were responsible for leading the people into sin, despite possessing knowledge of God’s laws. Religiously, economically and socially, Israel and Judah were in decline. Unfortunately, history shows that the stubbornness of these nations, and, in particular, their leaders, led to sorrow, bitterness and, in the end, national captivity.

The theme of Micah is very important to understand. Customarily, Micah is considered a prophet of judgment. That seems to be true since in the first three chapters there is a great emphasis on judgment. However, although the first three chapters are denunciatory, the last four chapters are consolatory. His great question is found in one of the loveliest passages of Scripture. “Who is like unto Thee?” that is, unto God. Finally, in chapter 7: Who is like unto God in pardoning? This is what makes Micah a wonderful little book. The main theme of the book is God’s judgment and redemption—both are there. The key verses are Micah 7:18-20, which conclude his book with the promise that God will pardon sin, show mercy to Israel/Judah, and fulfill the covenant.

### Messianic Prophecy in Micah

The prophecy of the birth of Christ as the Messiah and coming Ruler (Micah 5:2) is quoted in Matthew 2:6. This is interesting, as it shows that the people at the time of Christ understood and accepted that Micah 5:2 was a prophecy of the Messiah to come.

The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.	
Prophecy	Fulfillment
<p><b>Micah 5:2a</b></p> <p>"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."</p>	<p><b>Matthew 2:1-2</b></p> <p>"NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."</p>
	<p><b>Luke 2:4-7</b></p> <p>And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.</p> <p>And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.</p>

Another, less explicit, messianic passage is in Micah 1:3-4 wherein the prophet pictures Christ’s Coming(s) to “tread on the high places [a figure of speech referring to God’s judgment] of the earth.” Numerous scriptures provide support for this verse, including Revelation 19:11-16, showing Christ returning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

## Restoration theme in Micah

Despite the dire warnings and threats of punishments, war and captivity, Micah has a most encouraging and reassuring message of future hope, peace and an abundant life for all peoples and nations.

We should pay attention to how these two themes are contrasted, especially the promise of future glory and greatness. The best example is Micah 4:1-5 is very similar to Isaiah 2:1-4.

The book of Micah contains this very encouraging passage: “Now it shall come to pass *in the latter days* that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. *Many nations* shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; *He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.*’

“For out of Zion the *law shall go forth*, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples; ... they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. ... And no one shall make them afraid; *for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.* For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”

Micah anticipates that it is the *law* that shall proceed as a tool of instruction from Jerusalem. Keep in mind that the New Testament was not in existence when Micah wrote. As the Church living between the two Advents, we know that it is not just the law, but Christ Himself, who has already inaugurated a coming Kingdom that shows us God’s ways, and how to “walk in His paths.” Micah 4:7 adds: “So the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever.” Christians believe that, at His Second Coming, Christ will return to consummate His Kingdom to rule over a restored heaven and earth with His resurrected saints (Zechariah 14:4-5, 9).

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### FINAL QUESTIONS:

1. What aspects of the prophecies of Micah have already been fulfilled, and what does the Church (and the world) still anticipate from this book?
2. What spiritual and moral admonitions from Micah can we still practice while we await for the Second Advent of Christ? How does this relate to the idea of “readiness” which we find in some of Jesus’ parables, like the “Wise and Foolish Virgins” and the “Talents” (St. Matthew 25)?