

God's Special People (Micah)



SABBATH—MAY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Micah 1:1–9; 2 Corinthians 11:23–27; Micah 2:1–11; Micah 5:2; Micah 6:1–8; Micah 7:18–20.

MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD has shown you what is good. He has told you what he requires of you. You must treat people fairly. You must love others faithfully. And you must be very careful to live the way your God wants you to” (Micah 6:8, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: Even in times of the worst backsliding (falling away from God), the Lord is willing to forgive and heal His people.

THE PROPHET (SPECIAL MESSENGER) MICAH WORKED IN ONE OF THE DARKEST PERIODS OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY. The country had been divided into two kingdoms for a long time. Finally, Assyria put an end to the northern kingdom. And Micah could see evil getting worse and worse in Judah in the south. He preached against the fatal sins of dishonesty, injustice, bribery (the act of influencing with money), and mistrust. Micah was the first Bible prophet to prophesy (foretell) that Jerusalem would be destroyed (Micah 3:12).

But with the Holy Spirit's leading, Micah saw light in this dark time. With the help of God, Micah looked beyond the coming punishment. He offered encouraging words and said that the Lord's chosen Leader (Jesus) would come from Bethlehem. The Messiah (Chosen One) would be the Leader who would save Israel and speak peace to the nations by teaching them to “hammer their spears into pruning tools” (Micah 4:3, NIV). In other words, God's punishment would lead Israel to restoration¹ and great blessings.

1. restoration—the process by which things are returned to their original or a renewed condition.

SUNDAY—MAY 12**PAIN IN THE PROPHET'S HEART
(Micah 1:1–9)**

In Micah 1:1–9, the prophet invites everyone on the whole earth to witness God's judgment against sinful people. The capital cities of Samaria and Jerusalem are going to be punished because their leaders have failed to show others how to follow God with a faithful heart. These two cities will be the first to be destroyed.

The thought of judgment caused much tension in Micah's life. Because Micah's work as a prophet united (joined) him with God's purpose, he had no choice but to tell people what was coming in the near future. But the prophet also loved the people of his country. And the idea that they would become slaves drove Micah to great personal sadness. Oftentimes bad news had the most terrible result on the mind and the body of the prophet.

What do Numbers 11:10–15; 1 Kings 19:14; Jeremiah 8:21–9:2; Ezekiel 24:15–18; and 2 Corinthians 11:23–27 teach us about how hard the job of a prophet is?

God's prophets were very involved in the messages that they announced. They did not enjoy speaking about the terrible things that would happen. They often added sad songs to explain how they felt about the terrible things that would happen. Their pain was real. To their listeners, the

message included both words and signs. These signs showed the deep pain of the prophets. The way Micah felt about God's punishment reminds us of Isaiah. Isaiah walked half-naked and barefoot for three years to show the shame that slavery in Babylon would bring. For those of you who have books by Ellen G. White, you can read about the great suffering that she went through in her work as a prophet. This will help you to better understand what these prophets of God had to go through.

Read 1 Peter 4:14–16 and then look at yourself and whatever trials (hardships; troubles) you are going through. How much suffering has come to you because of your faithfulness to God? How much has come because of your unfaithfulness?



Isaiah walked half-naked and barefoot as a sign of the shame that slavery in Babylon would bring.

MONDAY—MAY 13**THOSE WHO SIN (Micah 2:1–11)**

Read Micah 2:1–11 and Micah 3. What are the sins that cause judgment to come upon these people?

“When Ahaz became king of Judah, he brought his fellow prophets face to face with conditions that were more terrible than ever experienced before in Judah’s history. Many had refused to accept the influence and practices [ways] of idol worship. But now they were being encouraged to worship false gods. Princes in Israel were proving to be not trustworthy. False prophets were arising with messages to lead people astray [away from the right way]. Even some of the priests were teaching for profit. But these false leaders pretended to still be God’s people.

“The prophet Micah remained faithful to God during those terrible times. Micah announced that sinners in Zion claimed to ‘depend on the Lord,’ and boasted, ‘The Lord is with us. No trouble will come to us.’ But they continued to ‘build up Zion by spilling the blood of others. You build Jerusalem by doing what is evil.’ Micah 3:11, 10 [NirV].”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 322.

The Jewish people deceived themselves into thinking that their being God’s people would protect them from God’s punishment. But the opposite was true: because they were God’s chosen people, they would be judged

much more guilty for their sins. The Lord often warned His people that all His promises of blessings, protection, and special rights depended on their obedience to His commands. Read this warning in Deuteronomy 4:9, NirV: “Don’t [do not] be careless. Instead, be very careful. Don’t [do not] forget the things your eyes have seen. As long as you live, don’t [do not] let them slip from your mind. Teach them to your children and their children after them.”

In what ways are we, as Seventh-day Adventists, with so much light, in danger of fooling ourselves?



Some of the priests taught for profit.

TUESDAY—MAY 14**A NEW RULER FROM BETHLEHEM (Micah 5:2)**

The mood often changes in Micah’s book from sadness to great hope. This hope is found in one of the most famous prophecies² about the Messiah (Jesus).

2. prophecies—special messages from God, often explaining what will happen in the future.

Read Micah 5:2. Who is Micah speaking about here, and what does this teach us about Him? Read also John 1:1–3; John 8:58; and Colossians 1:16, 17.

Out of a little Judean town (Bethlehem) would come Someone from eternity to be a Ruler in Israel. Micah 5:2 is one of the most important Bible verses written. It serves to strengthen the hope of the people. These people are the ones who eagerly await the ideal Leader promised by the prophets. His rule would bring a time of strength, justice, and peace (Micah 5:4–6).

David was born in Bethlehem. This town also is called Ephrath (Genesis 35:19). This town also points to the humble beginning of both David and his future successor (Jesus), who would be the True Shepherd of this people (Micah 5:4). In the humble town of Bethlehem, the prophet Samuel anoints Jesse's youngest son, David, who is to be king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1–13; 1 Samuel 17:12). When the wise men come looking for the newborn "king of the Jews," King Herod asks the Bible experts where he should look for him (Matthew 2:4–6). The experts pointed the king to this verse (Micah 5:2). This verse foretells that the Messiah would come from the small town of Bethlehem.

Our limited human minds cannot fully understand this truth: that the baby who was born was the eternal God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. "From the days of eternity

the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 19. This idea may be amazing. But it is one of the most basic truths of Christian doctrine (teachings). The Creator God took it upon Himself to become a human. In that human form He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Take the time to think deeply about what this teaches us about both the value of our lives and what we as individuals mean to God. If you do, you can have a life-changing experience. So many people struggle to find purpose and meaning in their lives. But we have the foundation of the Cross, which connects us to what our lives mean. It also gives us the greatest hope that this world ever could offer.



Jesus is the True Shepherd of His people.

WEDNESDAY—MAY 15

WHAT IS GOOD (Micah 6:1–8)

In the beginning of Micah 6, God speaks to His people. He lists all the things that He has done for their good. In answer, the worshiper who comes

into the temple asks what he might do to please God. What is an acceptable (pleasing) offering: year-old calves, a multitude (many) of rams, rivers of oil, or even the worshiper's first-born child? The verse shows that the gifts are listed in increasing size and value.

Read Micah 6:1–8. What crucial (very important) truth is being taught here? Why is this very important for us, as Seventh-day Adventists? How does this explain that truth is more than just correct doctrine and correct understanding of prophecy? Read Matthew 23:23.

The prophet announces that God already has shown what He wants. The people know what God has kindly done for them because Moses told them (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13). Micah's answer is not new information. It shows no change in God's requirements. Sacrifices and priestly services are not God's first concern. God's greatest wish is to have a people who act fairly toward their neighbors, with great love for the Lord. And the greatest offering that people can give to God is obedience.

Micah 6:8 is the most beautiful way of saying what God wants for His people. It summarizes all teachings of true religion: live a life showing justice, mercy, and a close walk with God. Justice is something that people do when they are led by God's Spirit. It has to do with fairness and equal-

ity for all. This includes the weak and powerless who are used by others. Kindness means to freely and willingly show love, loyalty, and faithfulness to others. And walking with God means to put God first and to live according to His will.

Why is it easier to “keep” the Sabbath strictly than it is to be just, love mercy, and walk humbly before God?



Walking with God means to put God first and to do His will.

THURSDAY—MAY 16

INTO THE DEEP SEA (Micah 7:18–20)

Micah's book begins with a description of judgments. But it ends with words of hope. There are people who try to make excuses for God's judgments. To do this is to fall into the trap that Micah's fellow countrymen did. They are the ones who believed that God never would send judgments on the chosen nation.

God's justice is the other side of His love and concern. The good news given by Micah is that punishment is never God's last word. God's action in the Bible always moves from judgment to forgiveness, from punishment to grace,³ and from suffering to hope.

Read Micah 7:18–20. How is the gospel shown in these verses? What hope is here for all of us? Why do we need it so much?

Micah's closing verses show that his praise is filled with hope. And the question "Who is a God like you . . .?" (NKJV) matches Micah's name. His name means "Who is like the Lord?" It reminds us that God is very special. And it supports the truth that there is no one like Him. How could there be? After all, He alone is the Creator. Everything else is created. Even more important, our Creator is a God of grace and forgiveness. He is a God who paid the greatest price possible to save us from being destroyed. And we deserved to be destroyed too. God paid that price for the Hebrew nation. And He paid it for us too.

Today we may be surrounded by difficult problems and painful experiences. They may make us wonder why God lets all this happen. Sometimes it is just so hard to understand these things. In such times, our hope depends only on the Lord, who promises to throw our sins "into the bottom of the sea" (Micah 7:19, NIV). In other words, there is hope for the future when we remember what God has done in the past.

Take a good look at yourself. Why is your only hope found in the promise that God will throw your sins "into the bottom of the sea"?

FRIDAY—MAY 17

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "Suppose Jerusalem had listened to all the light that Heaven had sent her. She might have had great pride in her success and glory. She might have become the queen of kingdoms, free in the strength of her God-given power. There would have been no armed soldiers standing at her gates. . . . Jesus foresaw the glorious future that might have blessed Jerusalem if she had accepted her Savior. He saw that Jerusalem might through Him have been healed of her serious sickness, freed from slavery, and established as the mighty city of the earth. From her walls the dove of peace would have gone forth [out] to all nations. She would have been the world's crown of glory."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 577.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Do you want to read in modern language about the suffering that God's prophets often went through? Then read from the book *Life Sketches*, by Ellen G. White. What does this book teach about the work and trials (problems) that God's faithful messengers can face?

3. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sin.

② It is so easy to become too interested in religious forms, traditions, and rituals (services). They all may be fine. But what happens when these forms and rituals fail to point us toward what it truly means to be a follower of God?

③ Think more deeply about the whole idea of the Incarnation.⁴ Incarnation means that the Creator

God took upon Himself our human flesh. As one Bible thinker of the Middle Ages wrote, “Keeping all that He was, Christ took upon Himself what He wasn’t [was not].” That is, He became human. Think about what this wonderful truth shows about God’s love for us. Why should this truth fill us with hope, thankfulness, and praise, no matter what situations we find ourselves in?

4. Incarnation—the coming of Jesus as a human being, born of Mary’s womb.