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## Preface

This book is the result of a series of sermons, delivered in the fall of 1976 in the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington, Ontario. The author decided to publish only because members of the congregation requested written copies of what had been presented from the pulpit. Publication was deemed reasonable and proper because the sermons deal with one specific Bible book, forming a clear unity, and this book can therefore have a broader function than a bundle of sermons on various subjects. It could perhaps be used as a help or guide in studying the prophecies of Micah at home or at society meetings.

To avoid the idea of a "sermon-book," the sermons were printed in the form of meditations, with thoughts collected under separate headings to facilitate reading. Here and there paragraphs were added to clarify certain matters. If the chapters are to be read as sermons, the theme and points should be inserted at the asterisk (\*). Some chapters may seem somewhat lengthy for sermon reading, but practice will prove that the service will not be too long if the reader is fluent and avoids dramatics.

In other words, you have a combination of sermons and meditations, a book which is useful for public worship and for individual study. Hopefully, in this form, the churches will be served with this publication.

The book has no scientific or scholarly pretensions and should not be regarded as a "commentary" on a Bible book. Even the sources used for the exegesis are not mentioned and the author has expressly tried to avoid difficult expressions to make reading easy.

I would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of my sister, Beverly, who was responsible for the final typescript, and the willingness of the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene to act as corrector. May the Lord grant that also through this small work His Name be glorified.

Burlington, February 1977

Cl. Stam

## **Introduction**

It is not my intention to introduce the prophet Micah to you in this little chapter. Micah proves who he is in his words and actions. But I would like to show you the line which I have tried to make clear in these chapters, the basic line of all prophesy, the heart of the scriptures: God's redemptive work in Christ.

Micah's name means: Who is like Yahweh? And Yahweh is the God of the Covenant, who remains ever faithful to His given word throughout the history of the world. The only living God, unique in His very being and activity.

Micah's name already gives the theme of his prophecies. He will direct the Church to this covenant God, who works salvation according to His predetermined plan, glorifying Himself in His Son Jesus Christ. Micah calls his people back to this God and this covenant, and therefore, like all the prophets of Israel, Micah is a prophet of the Reformation. He preaches reformation; that is: the return to the Word of God, the one foundation.

Israel's prophets become more and more significant in these times in which the revelation of God in the Old Testament is being grossly neglected and theology is becoming increasingly humanistic. Many churches point their members to possibilities within mankind; all false religions are auto-soteric and stress man's self-justification. The Reformed Churches wish to preserve the purity of the true confession: only in Christ, only out of grace, only through faith. For this reason only we maintain a separate existence as churches in this country. If we are to be one with Micah and the prophets, one with the apostles, and what is more, if we are to be a true church of Jesus Christ, we must uphold the infallibility and the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures.

God liberated us so that we would continue to seek all salvation apart from ourselves in Jesus Christ. That's what the Bible is all about. And that's what this book is all about. A book about the reformation which came out of God and is to God, so that He might be all and in all, and no man would boast in His presence.

# 1. Deformation and Judgment

Micah was a man with a special task. He was called and sent by the LORD so that he, in turn, might call his people, Israel, back to the covenant-service of God. He was also called to be instrumental in revealing the eternal counsel and will of God concerning redemption in Christ. There lies the real key to our understanding and explanation of Micah's prophesy; like all prophets, he points to the Lord Jesus Christ in His coming to achieve full salvation for His people. In this sense the apostle Peter later wrote of men like Micah, "The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory" (1 Peter 1:10,11). Micah, too, was inspired by this Spirit of Christ, and spoke of Christ's suffering (5:1, the ruler of Israel being smitten with a rod upon the cheek) and the subsequent glory (5:4, and He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord).

Micah lived in a very exciting, decisive time, some seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, at the "tail-end" of Israel's pre-exilic existence. In chapter 1:1, we read a few particulars. It was in the time of the kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah that he prophesied. We also read that Micah lived in Moresheth, a village near the Philistine city of Gath, in the southern Kingdom of Judah.

Micah's time is characterized by a relative wealth and prosperity for both northern Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah. But as is the case with much wealth: it is deceptive. His time also clearly reveals rising political dissension, impending wars, and coming disasters. Smaller kingdoms are being swallowed up by larger nations such as Assyria. In the east the Babylonians and Chaldeans are becoming powerful.

Let's say that it reminds us of the "last fling" of a very decadent society; rich, yet with economic recession; stable, yet with growing instability; outwardly looking secure and healthy, but inwardly weak and sick. In such a time Micah spoke the Word of God.

## **PLACE**

It is important to note that Micah was not the only prophet of the LORD during this time. As a matter of fact, this particular historic

period has been referred to as "the prime period of prophesy." These same years, for example, gave us prophets like Hosea, Amos, Joel, and also Isaiah. It is a time of much prophetic activity; befitting the "last fling" there comes a final warning. The LORD is gracious in this respect: Israel is not deported before the Word of the Covenant has been richly and amply preached. Israel can never say: we did not know.

We will find many similarities between all these prophets, especially between Micah and Isaiah, since they were both from the southern Kingdom of Judah, and mainly concerned with the happenings in and about Jerusalem. A part of Micah 4 is even identical to a section of Isaiah 2, a matter of prophetic duplication. That is a difficult exegetical problem, but discussing it would go beyond the scope of a meditative excursion.

So Micah did not stand alone in these difficult years. But Micah certainly does have his own *place*, character, and emphasis, also prophetically. Generally speaking, Isaiah was more concerned with Judah and Jerusalem. It is not insignificant that Isaiah's prophecy starts with these words, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos which he saw concerning *Judah and Jerusalem...*" (Isaiah 1:1). Hosea, in turn, was mostly concerned with northern Israel, while Amos was a southerner preaching in the northern Kingdom. Micah is concerned with *both* the North and the South, for we read in chapter 1:1, "The Word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning *Samaria and Jerusalem.*" I even think: Micah ties in the one with the other rather strongly. What happens in Samaria certainly is significant for Jerusalem. The situation in Judah is important for the Kingdom of Israel.

At this time, indeed, Israel -- once called to form one covenant nation of the LORD -- had been torn apart by disunity and strife. The North and the South are going each in their own separate ways, at times even battling one another. But Micah deals with *both* in their own and mutual responsibilities as the one covenant nation of the LORD. And he sees in *both* nations the same process of deformation and knows that in this way both will meet the certain judgment of the LORD.\*

## EXAMPLE

One might even characterize the first chapter as a warning to the southern Kingdom of Judah in which use is made of the *example* of Samaria in the north. What is happening (or will happen soon) to Samaria is relevant and instructive especially for Jerusalem. Such