



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Micah 1:10-16

“The Lesson from the Lord's Blows”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for another privilege: the privilege of reading the prophecies of a man who lived over twenty-five hundred years ago but whose thoughts are plain and clear with reference to divine truth and who has a message that is relevant to us in so many ways so many centuries later. We thank Thee for the desire of the prophet to bring his people back to repentance and faith. We realize that history tells us that so far as his ultimate goal was concerned it was not attained. The nation did fall further into apostasy and wickedness and evil, and it was necessary for them to be taken captive and to spend many years in captivity. And in fact, that discipline period is still being undergone by the nation.

But nevertheless, Lord, we realize it is our responsibility, all of us, to listen to Thy word and respond to it. We pray that thou would give us listening ears and responsive minds and hearts. And where repentance is necessary, give us, Lord, a repentant heart. And we pray that as a result of our study, we in our own Christian lives may effectively represent the Lord Jesus Christ in this age in which Thou hast put us. We thank Thee for the prophet Micah whose words are a source of comfort and challenge and also very embarrassing and disturbing so often as we read through what he had to say with

reference to the nation. We commit this time to Thee and pray Thy blessing upon us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We're looking at Micah chapter 1, verse 10 through verse 16 tonight, and this is the second of our series of studies in this prophet who prophesied as he says in the first verse of the first chapter in the days of "Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah," giving us prophecies that he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Micah was from Judah but he prophesied for the whole nation. His greatest concern, of course, was for Jerusalem itself because Jerusalem is the capital city. And as is so often the case, the capital city is the source of the evil and often the source from which the good comes.

The subject for tonight as we look at these verses is "The Lesson from the Lord's Blows." There are some important emphases that emerge from these verses. The thing that is striking about this section of Micah is the fact that verse 10 through verse 16 is filled with puns, yes, filled with puns, word plays.

Now we're inclined to think that puns are a rather low form of humor. But in the case of the prophet it was not so. He used word play and he used puns but they were very serious. And furthermore in the time in which he gave these prophecies, puns were regarded as extremely serious because it was considered something that was not accidental. And therefore, when he fills his verses here with puns as we shall see, he has some very serious thoughts lying back of them. And it is in this very vivid way that he wanted to make plain to the people of Samaria and Judah the lessons that God wanted them to learn.

One of the lessons that emerges from these verses is the lesson of divine judgment. And the thing about it that comes through is the fact that divine judgment is real and that it is terrible, too. Now we've read in verse 2 through verse 7 of chapter 1

the picture that he gave of the coming of the Lord in judgment. Listen again to these words, verse 2 and following.

"Hear, you peoples, all of you; hearken, O earth, and all that is in it: and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the LORD from his holy temple. For, behold, the LORD is coming forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will be cleft, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the sin of the house of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? (Now notice that verse because in the subject that we look at tonight in the latter part of this chapter we have an answer to the question "What is the transgression of Samaria and what's the sin of the house of Judah? He continues in verse 6.) Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. (Samaria is going to become just like an ancient tel that the archeologists work with today.) All her images shall be beaten to pieces, all her hires shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, from the hire of a harlot she gathered them, and to the hire of a harlot they shall return."

When we think of divine judgment, theologians who do not divert our ears with chatter speak of three kinds. There is rectoral justice and that's the justice with which God rules the world. The justice with which in his own power and strength he is responsible for moral government of the whole world, not only of the world but also of the angelic beings as well. So rectoral justice is the justice with which he rules all of this universe that he has created.

Distributive justice they also speak of as containing two kinds of justice. But distributive justice is the justice with which he executes his law as revealed in Scripture. It

is remunerative in the sense that he renders to those who he regards as recipients of rewards that which is in his divine love to give them. Now no one ever really deserves a reward, so it is divine love by which God gives unworthy sinners a reward. It's a testimony to his grace. And that's why all of the saints of God, so far as we can tell from the Bible, when they come into the presence of the Lord and are given rewards, they'll cast them at the feet of the Lord Jesus in acknowledgment of the fact that it is by him that they were able to do anything that pleased the Lord. So distributive justice is remunerative and it's also retributive.

Now, if remunerative justice is the expression of the divine love of God by which he gives us rewards, distributive justice is the expression of the divine wrath by which after he has reached his point of provocation he then renders to men that which their works demand. In Romans chapter 2 and verse 6, 7 and 8 he speaks of remunerative justice: God will reward men according to their works. And he speaks also of divine wrath, divine wrath also in 2 Thessalonians when he talks about the second coming of the Lord Jesus rendering vengeance to those that do not believe in the Lord God.

The third kind of justice is redemptive justice, redemptive righteousness. That's something that's conveyed to us if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we are regarded as righteous by what Christ has done for us.

Now that redemptive justice is something that is given to us in grace. We are declared righteous before God because we are reckoned to be in Christ, and we're acceptable to the Lord as the Son of God is acceptable.

Now you can tell from what Micah writes here in chapter 2, that when he talks about justice and judgment he's talking about retributive justice, part of his distributive justice, in which in his divine wrath he finally finds it necessary to execute judgment upon the nation Israel.

The other lesson that appears in this chapter in the section that we are studying is the lesson of faith, and this is most important it seems to me. What he in effect tells

Judah and what he tells Samaria is that one must not put faith in the mobile chariot brigade. One must not put faith in armaments.

Now people transfer this to the United States falsely because we're talking about a theocratic people, a people that acknowledged that Yahweh was their God. The United States is not a divine country. It's not a country founded upon the solid rock of the Bible and of the truth through Jesus Christ. Let us never forget that. So far as I can tell, it never was a Christian country, that is, in its constitution. And therefore, we cannot apply things like that to the United States. But those principles are principles that pertain to all of the nations. Hence the lesson of the fact that faith in Yahweh or faith in the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate security.

The essence of secularism and the essence of secularistic humanism for Israel was to trust in their armaments, to trust in their chariots, to trust in men. To trust in Yahweh was that to which they were called. To be secularistic is to trust in things other than the Lord God. So these two great things: judgment and faith.

And we'll see that the prophets who prophesied in the eighth century before our Lord, who prophesied in the days of Ahaz and Jotham and Hezekiah, laid great stress upon this because Israel thought that her security depended upon her relationship to the nations about her. And so when they were attacked by one nation, they frequently went down to, if from Assyria, they had a tendency to go down into Egypt for help. In other words, instead of appealing to the Lord God who is the only source of security, they appealed to men. And over and over again the prophets had to speak very strongly about that.

The historical background of Micah to which I've already alluded is linked with Sargon the second's campaigns against Philistia on the coast. Sargon the second was an Assyrian king or an Assyrian emperor. And in the year of seven-twenty, he had a campaign against Philistia. And then again in seven-fourteen to seven-eleven BC, just the time of these kings referred to in Micah chapter 1, he came down again against Philistia.

So Micah's day was filled with wars and rumors of wars. And evidently this prophet was given a presentiment of doom by the Lord God.

Sennacherib who succeeded Sargon the second came down and took Samaria later on. And this is what he wrote, we have his words. Listen to what the great Assyrian king says, "I besieged and I took Samaria and led away booty; as booty twenty-seven thousand two-hundred and ninety inhabitants thereof, together with their chariotry. The terror inspiring glamour of Ashur my lord overwhelmed them. At the very mention of my name their hearts pounded in fright. Their arms lost their vigor." He's boasting of his conquest in seven-twenty-two BC right in the time of the prophecy of Micah.

Twenty years later, his successor on the Assyrian throne at about seven hundred and one BC, Sennacherib reports, "As for Hezekiah of Judah, I besieged forty-six of his strong fortified cities. I drove out as booty two-hundred-thousand one-hundred-fifty persons, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle and flocks beyond counting. Himself, the Assyrian king says of Hezekiah, Himself I shut up as a prisoner in his royal city Jerusalem like a bird in a cage." Isn't that interesting? Like a bird in a cage. The brilliant terror of my lordship overwhelmed Hezekiah.

Now people were desperately afraid of the Assyrians, and they were afraid of the Assyrians because of the things that they did with those that they conquered. They enslaved the vanquished. They had a policy of calculated cruelty reminding one of North Vietnam, of Russia and of many of the other totalitarian nations who have it as a part of their campaign, part of their principle, to induce fear in the population by the extremes of cruelty that they carry out.

For example, they tended to rip up pregnant women to destroy the recalcitrants' unborn next generation. They did many other things like this. They would enslave people. They would take them out of their country and settle them in other countries if they could not be ruled by someone that they put on the throne. And many of the things that they did were things that were, well, they were enough to make people afraid.

These are the people who were attacking the various cities around Samaria and Judah when Micah is prophesying.

Now we come to verse 10 through verse 16, and we have a simple structure again. Micah gives us three stanzas. The first of his stanzas is verse 10 through verse 12. And then verse 13 through verse 15 is his second stanza. And the final stanza is in the 16th verse.

Now these stanzas are very interesting. Two of them, the first two of them are of seven lines each. You see the prophets wrote most frequently in poetic form, Hebrew poetic form. So the first seven lines mark the first stanza, the next seven lines the next stanza. And then the last of the stanzas is one stanza but just the two lines.

Now all of these towns that are mentioned here. Someone came up to me Sunday I believe and said, I'm interested in the things you're going to say about all those towns that occur in verse 10 through verse 16. Well, you know, I've always wanted to study Micah. It's one of, it's the only minor prophet I think that I've never studied in detail and preached upon, so I'm really enjoying the study of Micah. I've always wanted to really work in this prophecy.

Now all of these towns were towns in what is called the Shephelah of the land of Palestine. Now the Shephelah is the low lying country to the south and west of Jerusalem. About say fifteen or twenty miles from Jerusalem, between the coasts and the Judean mountains is the Shephelah in the southwest. That's where Micah lived. He came from Moresheth Gath. And so this part of the country was country that he knew very well. That's one of the reasons, no doubt, that he picks these particular places in order to prophesy with reference to them. And we will see in a moment what he does is pick out places that have significant names because he's going to use those names to give his prophecy. So this was the Shephelah, the low lying country. *Shaphel* in Hebrew means “to be low,” and thus it's the low lying ground. Jerusalem is up high. It's between the coast at sea level and in those Judean hills on the way up to the city to the southwest.

There is a lot of word play here, a lot of puns. But as I say, these were very serious to the Semites, for names to them were omens. And so what he has done is incorporate this into his prophecy.

Now he has done it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but he has selected the names from this part of the country with which he was very familiar in order to get over his message. It would be similar to, if we were to make out of names, if we were to say something like this. Someone has given us some illustrations, I'll just use them. Tacoma will give off a terrible aroma. If we wanted to say something about Tacoma, we might say it in that way. Or if we wanted to say something about the city of Philadelphia, we might, if we wanted to say that it's a difficult place to live in day by day because of the crowds and traffic, we might say, The city of brotherly love will become the city of the hateful shove. You can see by the play on words how that's rather vivid. Or Fort Worth will be called Power Dearth. That's not a bad one in my opinion. But anyway, this is the kind of language that is used. So these names of the cities have very great significance.

Now what I want to do in the time that we have is to read the stanzas and comment on the names of the towns because his whole story is built around the names of the towns. Let's read now verse 10 through verse 12. The prophet says,

"Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all. In Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust. Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir in nakedness and shame. The inhabitants of Zaanan do not come forth. The wailing of Beth-ezel shall take away from you its standing place. For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good, because evil has come down from the LORD, to the gate of Jerusalem."

The first place that is mentioned is the town Gath. Now that's a Philistine town. "Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all." You may remember that when David learned of the death of Saul and of Jonathan, because of the wars with the Philistines, he gave a kind of



funeral eulogy over Saul and over Jonathan because of the national disaster that had taken place in the death of the king and of his son. Now Micah draws upon that and says, "Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all."

Now ordinarily when some catastrophe occurs you would have elaborate funeral ritual in eastern places. They were noted for the loud cries of lamentation that they ordinarily expressed. So what Micah is saying is here is something that you will not want told in Gath, the Philistine town, because it's going to be such a tragedy, such a catastrophe for the people of Judah and Samaria. So, "Tell it not in Gath" because that would be so embarrassing for Israel. "Weep not at all." The rites, the funeral rites that you would ordinarily give are to be foregone because of the dire catastrophe that is going to come to the capitals of the land.

The second place that is mentioned is Beth-le-aphrah. Now this was a little town that was located in the Shephelah. And he says, "In Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust." Now this was way over on the east side of the Shephelah and so this was a long ways from the Philistines; and therefore he could say to the east there will be much mourning.

This little town, incidentally, is a town that means, it has a name that's very similar to the Hebrew word for dust, house of dust. In fact, some of the commentators have (just in order to get over the pun, the word play that Micah is getting, is using by picking this city) called this town 'Dustville.' That name Aphrah is very close to the Hebrew word for dust. So here's a little town that meant something like house of dust, Dustville.

Now he said in the case of Dustville, there'll be people over there rolling themselves in the dust mourning over the catastrophe and judgment that has fallen upon them. So what Micah is doing then, you see, is just picking out the names of towns all over this whole area in order to get over his spiritual message.

We could do that too if we wanted to say certain things, we would pick out certain towns that we were familiar with. If I was going to say to you that we're going to

have an influx of insects, I might use Chigger Hill, Alabama in order to get over my point. There is a place in Alabama named Chigger Hill. When I was in the insurance business I used to have to map or underwrite insurance in Chigger Hill, Alabama. I couldn't believe there was a town named like that, but there were other towns that were at least as humorous.

And when I came here to Texas and was going through the seminary I worked in the insurance business downtown and did underwriting there too. And let me tell you, Texas has got some peculiarly named towns also. So I think I could get up a prophecy like Micah if I had time just to go over the names of places here.

Well, here is a little town Beth-le-aphrah and he says there's going to be a lot of mourning in that town.

He goes on to speak in verse 11, "Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir." Now Shaphir is a name that is very close to the Hebrew word for fair or beautiful. And so Moffett in his translation translates this 'Fair Town'. So pass on your way, inhabitants of Fair Town, in nakedness and shame.

You see, what is going to happen to them is when the Assyrians, or he doesn't name the Assyrians here, but when the foreigners come in and take over because of your turning away from the Lord God, you who live in Fair Town, you're going to go out naked as prisoners of war. So again, he says all of your fine clothes that you take such great delight in right now, you're not going to have them at all. You're going to be in chains. You're going to be naked. And you're going to have to leave your town.

In the 11th verse he continues, "The inhabitants of Zaanan do not come forth." This word Zaanan suggests the Hebrew word for going out. And so he's picked this name in order to show that here is one of the catastrophes that's going to happen to many of the towns: they're going to be so besieged by the invaders that they're not even going to be able to leave their city or their village. They're going to remain cooped up; just like that aircraft carrier of the Argentines was cooped up in the harbor for so long

because there was a British sub lying outside the harbor, so everyone thought. And so they're going to be in this town cooped up, and they're not going to be able to come out because of the siege that will be waged against them. They'll not be able to come out and help their friends. They are just nullified so far as the struggle is concerned.

He continues in the 11th verse, he says, "The wailing of Beth-ezel shall take away from you its standing place." Now Beth-ezel is a town that is very close to the term that meant standing so it has been translated 'Standton.' And furthermore this town will be so unable to do anything that they shall have taken away from them their standing place. Standton will have taken away from it their standing place. They will not be able to stand with their friends and they will become a further non-ally.

Something like the United States is almost in danger of becoming today when, in my opinion (It's going to be interesting to read, listen to this tape, about three to five years from now if someone ever does. But I don't understand why our country doesn't help those British.), Maggie needs some help and we could give her some help. I am enjoying Mrs. Thatcher's governing of this crisis very much. In fact, I'm beginning to think that she might make an excellent president of the United States if she would just come over here. And we could eliminate some of those wishy-washy guys in Washington who don't know exactly where to stand.

I've always thought that all of us in the free world ought to just hire the Israeli army in order to do our tasks because they don't care what the people think. They do what they think is right. And I must say I admire them for that. They don't care if somebody rises up and says, Well that's colonialism, so what? They're going to do what is right in their eyes.

Now of course, sometimes they do things that are wrong, but nevertheless, I've really enjoyed the Israelis. And I've often said if I was going to have to be a non-American citizen I think I would be forced to make a tough choice between Switzerland

and Israel. That's, in fact, I think I'd rather prefer Israel. But anyway, I think that's getting off the point here. So we better get back here to what we're talking about in Micah.

And in the 12th verse we read, "For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good." The term Maroth is very closely related to the Hebrew word for bitterness and so this has the idea of bitter things. It has been translated evil land, bitter things. "For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good." They whose name is evil things or bitter things wait in vain for better things because they're not coming, Micah says.

And then finally he concludes the first stanza by saying, "Because evil has come down from the LORD, to the gate of Jerusalem." Now Jerusalem is of course a term derived from *shalom* plus *uru* and many feel, at least it was the, what they say the folk derivation, that Jerusalem means something like the city of fortune, the city of peace. So misfortune shall come to the city of fortune. No peace will come to the city of peace.

But, notice what Micah has done. You might think that he would say, For evil has come down from Assyria to the gate of Jerusalem. But now he substitutes for Assyria: Yahweh. In other words, the one who is really behind all of this movement of the military against Samaria and against Judah is not Assyria or any other nation. But that which is behind it is the Lord himself, Yahweh. Because when people turn away from him in the theocratic nation, when it turns away from the Lord, their adversary becomes not Assyria or Egypt, but their adversary becomes Yahweh.

Now he turns the kings' hearts whithersoever he will. All of their hearts are in the hands of the Lord. Sargon the second could do nothing if God did not permit him to do it. Sennacherib could not do anything if the Lord had not directed him in his steps. For this is really the judgment of Yahweh upon the people of the Lord. It's a terrible thing. But when Sennacherib said of Hezekiah I shut him up like a caged bird, it was God who was doing that to Hezekiah and not Sennacherib except as an agent of the Most High God.

Now stanza two follows and in stanza two, verse 13 through verse 15, rebellion in Israel is the key thought. Evil from the Lord in the first stanza but now rebellion in Israel.

Each line of the stanza that follows in verse 13 through verse 15 ends in the word Israel. Let me read through the verses and just point that out because sometimes in the translation it's not so clear. But in the Hebrew text at the end of each of the lines of the stanza, there is the term Israel. Listen:

"Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish. You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel. Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath. The houses of Aczib shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel. I will again bring a conqueror upon you, inhabitants of Maresha, the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam."

But in the Hebrew text that "glory of Israel" is found at the end of the line. So each line of the stanza ends with the mention of Israel. Now that is intended by the prophet.

The question that one might have had from verse 5 is: What is Judah's injustice and what's Jacob's rebelliousness? What is the reason for this judgment? Micah has not told us specifically up to this point. He's just pronounced this judgment that is to come. And one might ask the question at this point: What's the reason for it?

Well, the reason for it is suggested here by the first line of the second stanza. He says, "Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish. You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel."

What is Judah's injustice? What is Jacob's rebelliousness? Well, it's Zion's enterprise of self defense. That's their problem. In other words, their desire for self preservation, their desire for self security apart from the Lord. In other words, they were trusting in the arrangements that they were making because the Assyrians were coming

down upon them, and they were not trusting in the Lord, and that was an evidence of divine displeasure. But instead of repenting and turning to the Lord and asking for mercy and deliverance, they were rushing off to the nations for help, or building their chariots. And so the sin of Judah and the sin of Samaria was in failure to turn in faith to the Lord which issued in the desire for self preservation, the desire for security and the desire for self defense.

It's the same kind of thing that Christians do when they look down toward the future and they say, You know, I've got to make provision for my retirement years. I've got to make provision for my old age. And so I must work like a dog and spend all of my time, all of my productive years of life making it possible for me when I get to be sixty-five years of age to sit back and know that I will survive. And in the meantime wasting all of our productive years for the service of the Lord. Not realizing that the Scriptures make it very plain that God has promised to care for all his saints. He said he will take care of us in any circumstance of life. The important thing is to use our years for the glory of God, to use the opportunity that we have to serve him in our society. He will take care of us. Put the Lord first.

So many of us do not really understand the importance of priorities in our Christian life. That is really fundamental. And it's a sad thing to see a person waste himself, waste his health, waste his opportunity for years of service failing to take advantage of youth and vitality and vigor for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we arrive at our age, old age, and we've got everything made. We have a long portfolio of securities and we have a nice income from retirement. But we're too sick and maimed and furthermore we've lost also any opportunities for growth. And the result is our last years are spent in uselessness too often.

Now I do think it's important for us to have some people in the Lord's work who have been given by God funds. The Lord's work must be carried on that way. I don't want to attack the older people who make the Lord's work actually succeed in so many

places. Believers Chapel could not get along were it not for the fact that people have been wise with their funds and have made it possible for us to carry on our ministry, the tape ministry, the radio ministry and other ministries are carried on by people who have the funds and self sacrificially give them in order that those things may be carried out.

But get, please get, our priorities straightened out while there is still time. And remember as long as we're alive everything is optimistic because the Lord has some purpose for every one of us.

Now Israel unfortunately forgot some of that fundamental fact of things and had turned to armaments instead of to the Lord.

Now this opening statement of verse 13, "Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish." Now Lachish was only six miles from Micah's home town. This is a town that one of the commentators calls 'Chariotsburg' because the term Lachish is very closely related to just that kind of thing, military chariots. But cynically Micah says are to be used in retreat. Listen, "Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish."

So sure, this was the place where the chariots of the army of Jerusalem were kept, but instead of harnessing them in order to carry out military activity, they're going to be used in retreat. So that faith in armaments makes Lachish a stable of the nation's crimes before God. And that's why he says in verse 13, "You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel." It was in Lachish that the chariots were kept for warfare and thus he singles them out for guilt for the secular humanism that characterized the land.

Now I want to ask you to turn over with me to the 5th chapter and let me read verse 10 through verse 15 because here the prophet says something about this in more detail. We read,

" 'And in that day,' says the Lord, 'I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots. And I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your

strongholds. And I will cut off sorceries from your hand and you will have no more soothsayers. And I will cut off your images and your pillars from among you; and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands. And I will root out your Asherime from among you and destroy your cities. And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance upon the nations that did not obey.' "

Well, he continues in verse 14, "Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath." That's a term that means Gath's possession and the name itself sounds very much like the Hebrew word *meorasheth* which means "betrothed"; so the city is promised to another. It was characteristic of young people when they married for the father to give gifts to the daughter who was marrying his son. And so in this case, he says, "You shall give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath. The city is promised to another and so therefore you are going to have to give your gifts to a foreign land, probably in the form of indemnities.

In verse 14 he continues by saying, "The houses of Aczib shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel." Aczib was also a little town in this part of the land of Palestine. And the name Aczib sounds very much like deceitful. It's a term that sometimes means "a lie". And so this is 'Deceitville'. And therefore he says, "The houses of Aczib shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel."

There are some indications that it's possible that royal pottery was produced in Aczib, very much like in Britain you know, when you go to Britain you'll find that a certain bakery is commissioned to bake things for the queen. Or a certain clothing store is commissioned to sell clothing to the royal house, this type of thing. Well Aczib was the place where royal pottery was made. And what he says about Aczib is again a cynical reference to that fact. "The houses of Aczib shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel."



And in verse 15, "I will again bring a conqueror upon you, inhabitants of Maresha." Now Maresha means possessor or heir. And what he in effect says is you're going to have new heir and it's not going to be the kind of heir that you would like to have. It's going to be a foreign heir. And so your name is suggestive of your destiny but in a very surprisingly wrong way.

And then in the last part of verse 15 he makes reference to one of the great events in David's life, "And the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam." Now the stanza began with the ominous illusion to David in verse 10 and here the second one closes with an illusion to David. You want the days of David back? He would say.

You know how people say, Oh if we just lived in the days of Washington. If we just lived in the days of Robert E. Lee. Or if we just lived in the days of Teddy Roosevelt. I've heard people say that ridiculous kind of statement.

But I'm sure that people said, Oh, if we could just be in the days of David. Well, you want the days of David back? Well, you remember David's experiences? David was an outlaw. David had to go down to the cave of Adullam. Do you remember what happened at the cave of Adullam? Know the story of David? Who gathered to David there? Well a first class crop of dropouts. That's what they were. They were the discontented and the malcontents and the others who gathered to King David. But by being gathered to David, they became a fighting force.

But when you think of the cave of Adullam you think of some rather rough living, kind of like going out to Pine Cove and not staying in one of the motel units but staying over there in the big building. Or if not going to Pine Cove, going out in a boys' camp and living under a tent. Just see some of those Argentines living in a tent down there on the Falkland Island where that wind is blowing; I don't know how hard it was blowing. I'm sure glad I'm not one of their soldiers.

But anyway, he says, "The glory of Israel shall come to Adullam." Those high and mighty in the city of Jerusalem shall find their way again into the cave of Adullam. Life's not going to be good under the Assyrians.

Finally, in verse 16 we come to the third stanza and it's an appeal for repentance, full mourning rites. You can sense the prophet's aching heart behind these words in verse 16. "Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair for the children of your delight." Make yourself bald.

Now, it was traditional when people mourned for the men to cut out a little patch of hair. Some men already have been preprogrammed for mourning. [Laughter] But it was characteristic to cut out a little patch of hair in order to show that you were in mourning, a kind of an external token of the sorrow that you were supposed to feel inside. But the prophet here calls for a larger area to be shaved. He says, "Make yourselves as bald as the eagle."

Now the reference is probably to the Griffon vulture which if you look at the Griffon vulture it has some little white hair but not a whole lot. And that particular form of the eagle, they're related, it appears to be bald. And so what he's saying is "Make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile."

In other words, and by the way, there's a kind of a play on words here and someone has translated it this way: Bare yourself bald like the beat bird. Micah was skillful in the use of words. You miss a lot of this in the English text. I wish it were true that we all understood Hebrew but it's a very vivid way of expressing the fact that troubles are going to be very deep and significant for the nation for they have departed from the Lord.

And this chapter ends as someone has said with a great shutter. "For they shall go from you into exile." Actually, he uses what is called the prophetic perfect in Hebrew. And the prophetic perfect is a use of a tense as if it has already occurred. For example, the Hebrew says, "For they have gone from you into exile." And the reason the tense is

used that way is in order to create a sense of certainty of this coming to pass. And so he doesn't say in the Hebrew text, For they shall go from you into exile. He says they have gone from you into exile. What that means is what the translators have said here: They shall go from you into exile and you can count on it as sure to come.

Well, puns and word plays are used by Micah to grimly show that their enemy is no longer Assyria. Their enemy is Yahweh. And what he wants to do is to bring them to concern from their complacency. The doom of Samaria mentioned in verses 1 through 9 is now disturbingly closer. It has come even to the gate of Jerusalem, we read in verse 12. Disaster is at the city's doorstep.

Micah would ask them to say: And we, how shall we escape? Because that would be the thing that would please the Lord. How shall we escape from this judgment? And the prophet no doubt would say as the prophets of the Old Testament say, Turn to the Lord.

Now we look at this and we say, What's the application to us? Does it have any reference to us? Well, I don't see how it could not help but have a very definite application to us. It has an application to the church of Jesus Christ because when the church of Jesus Christ begins to turn from the Scriptures, when it turns to the desiring in its ministry of chatter, when it turns from the solid things of the word of God, when it turns from the things that strengthen consciences to things that are light and superficial and shallow, you can be sure that we will suffer. It may take some time for it to work itself out but the time is coming when the church of Jesus Christ is going to suffer. And in fact, the Bible says very plainly the church of Jesus Christ that is disobedient will pass into the time of the Great Tribulation period that is to come to pass upon the earth.

Does it have any reference to Believers Chapel? You better be sure that it does. It has a very definite reference to Believers Chapel. If with the great privileges that we have had through the years of hearing the word of God we turn from the word of God and these things become things to which we do not pay any significant attention, if we

become indifferent and cold and if we forget that we have a God who desires that we approach him for our daily sustenance, for mercy and grace by which to live, if we forget that we are sinners, if we live as if he does not exist, you can be sure that this particular church shall also suffer.

And then of course, does it have any relationship to me? Well it certainly does. It tells me very plainly that if I neglect the Scriptures, and if I turn away from prayer, if I turn away from the personal relationship to the Lord, if I become cold to the things of God and live life as if: Well, it's not really significant much any more; if divine things do not mean anything much to me at all, well then divine discipline will come to me too. The discipline that God brought on the nation which has now sent them to the four corners of the earth and they're still scattered to the four corners of the earth, may come also to us, the Gentiles.

It is the Apostle Paul who writing in Romans chapter 11 offers this as an admonition to them because the tendency of human nature is to think that, well, with us it is different. But Paul says, "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you providing you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you Gentiles too will be cut off."

I'm not saying that once you have believed in Jesus Christ you may be lost. But you may come under the discipline of God. It's a very serious thing to belong to him and to his family and not be responsive to his word. He has ways of disciplining us in the Christian family and he is a Father who will do it.

May God help us to learn the lesson that Micah sought to teach Israel. And may we learn it a bit better and flee to him. It wouldn't hurt us, you know, to get down on our knees for a few days this week. Make proper confession. Give some thanks. Ask him to warm our hearts toward the things of the Lord. Enable us to use the life that he has given us in a way that will bring honor and glory to his name. May God help us to do it.

Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for Micah the prophet. He has surely spoken to us. Lord, we do pray that we may be responsive to the message that comes. "Oh, turn ye, turn ye," the prophets so often said to Israel. Oh God, turn us that we may be turned. For Jesus' sake. Amen.