

Sunday, December 15

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Micah 1:1 - 4:13

1 **1** The LORD gave this message to Micah of Moresheth during the years when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. The visions he saw concerned both Samaria and Jerusalem. **2** Attention! Let all the people of the world listen! Let the earth and everything in it hear. The Sovereign LORD is making accusations against you; the Lord speaks from his holy Temple. **3** Look! The LORD is coming! He leaves his throne in heaven and tramples the heights of the earth. **4** The mountains melt beneath his feet and flow into the valleys like wax in a fire, like water pouring down a hill. **5** And why is this happening? Because of the rebellion of Israel — yes, the sins of the whole nation. Who is to blame for Israel's rebellion? Samaria, its capital city! Where is the center of idolatry in Judah? In Jerusalem, its capital! **6** "So I, the LORD, will make the city of Samaria a heap of ruins. Her streets will be plowed up for planting vineyards. I will roll the stones of her walls into the valley below, exposing her foundations. **7** All her carved images will be smashed. All her sacred treasures will be burned. These things were bought with the money earned by her prostitution, and they will now be carried away to pay prostitutes elsewhere." **8** Therefore, I will mourn and lament. I will walk around barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl. **9** For my people's wound is too deep to heal. It has reached into Judah, even to the gates of Jerusalem. **10** Don't tell our enemies in Gath ; don't weep at all. You people in Beth-leaphrah, roll in the dust to show your despair. **11** You people in Shaphir, go as captives into exile—naked and ashamed. The people of Zaanan dare not come outside their walls. The people of Beth-ezel mourn, for their house has no support. **12** The people of Maroth anxiously wait for relief, but only bitterness awaits them as the LORD 's judgment reaches even to the gates of Jerusalem. **13** Harness your chariot horses and flee, you people of Lachish. You were the first city in Judah to follow Israel in her rebellion, and you led Jerusalem into sin. **14** Send farewell gifts to Moresheth-gath ; there is no hope of saving it. The town of Aczib has deceived the kings of Israel. **15** O people of Mareshah, I will bring a conqueror to capture your town. And the leaders of Israel will go to Adullam. **16** Oh, people of Judah, shave your heads in sorrow, for the children you love will be snatched away. Make yourselves as bald as a vulture, for your little ones will be exiled to distant lands.

2 **1** What sorrow awaits you who lie awake at night, thinking up evil plans. You rise at dawn and hurry to carry them out, simply because you have the power to do so. **2** When you want a piece of land, you find a way to seize it. When you want someone's house, you take it by fraud and violence. You cheat a man of his property, stealing his family's inheritance. **3** But this is what the LORD says: "I will reward your evil with evil; you won't be able to pull your neck out of the noose. You will no longer walk around proudly, for it will be a terrible time." **4** In that day your enemies will make fun of you by singing this song of despair about you: "We are finished, completely ruined! God has confiscated our land, taking it from us. He has given our fields to those who betrayed us." **5** Others will set your boundaries then, and the LORD's people will have no say in how the land is divided. **6** "Don't say such things," the people respond. "Don't prophesy like that. Such disasters will never come our way!" **7** Should you talk that way, O family of Israel? Will the LORD's Spirit have patience with such behavior? If you would do what is right, you would find my words comforting. **8** Yet to this very hour my people rise against me like an enemy! You steal the shirts right off the backs of those who trusted you, making them as ragged as men returning from battle. **9** You have evicted women from their pleasant homes and forever stripped their children of all that God would give them. **10** Up! Begone! This is no longer your land and home, for you have filled it with sin and ruined it completely. **11** Suppose a prophet full of lies would say to you, "I'll preach to you the joys of wine and alcohol!" That's just the kind of prophet you would like! **12** "Someday, O Israel, I will gather you; I will gather the remnant who are left. I will bring you together again like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture. Yes, your land will again be filled with noisy crowds! **13** Your leader will break out and lead you out of exile, out through the gates of the enemy cities, back to your own land. Your king will lead you; the LORD himself will guide you."

3 **1** I said, "Listen, you leaders of Israel! You are supposed to know right from wrong, **2** but you are the very ones who hate good and love evil. You skin my people alive and tear the flesh from their bones. **3** Yes, you eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin, and break their bones. You chop them up like meat for the cooking pot. **4** Then you beg the LORD for help in times of trouble! Do you really expect him to answer? After all the evil you have done, he won't even look at you!" **5** This is what the LORD says: "You false prophets are leading my people astray! You promise peace for those who give you food, but you declare war on those who refuse to feed you. **6** Now the night will close around you, cutting off all your visions. Darkness will cover you, putting an end to your predictions. The sun will set for you prophets, and your day will come to an end. **7** Then you seers will be put to shame, and you fortune-tellers will be disgraced. And you will cover your faces because there is no answer from God." **8** But as for me, I am filled with power— with the Spirit of the LORD. I am filled with justice and strength to boldly declare

Israel's sin and rebellion. **9** Listen to me, you leaders of Israel! You hate justice and twist all that is right. **10** You are building Jerusalem on a foundation of murder and corruption. **11** You rulers make decisions based on bribes; you priests teach God's laws only for a price; you prophets won't prophesy unless you are paid. Yet all of you claim to depend on the LORD. "No harm can come to us," you say, "for the LORD is here among us." **12** Because of you, Mount Zion will be plowed like an open field; Jerusalem will be reduced to ruins! A thicket will grow on the heights where the Temple now stands.

4 1 In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's house will be the highest of all— the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship. **2** People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. **3** The LORD will mediate between peoples and will settle disputes between strong nations far away. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. **4** Everyone will live in peace and prosperity, enjoying their own grapevines and fig trees, for there will be nothing to fear. The LORD of Heaven's Armies has made this promise! **5** Though the nations around us follow their idols, we will follow the LORD our God forever and ever. **6** "In that coming day," says the LORD, "I will gather together those who are lame, those who have been exiles, and those whom I have filled with grief. **7** Those who are weak will survive as a remnant; those who were exiles will become a strong nation. Then I, the LORD, will rule from Jerusalem as their king forever." **8** As for you, Jerusalem, the citadel of God's people, your royal might and power will come back to you again. The kingship will be restored to my precious Jerusalem. **9** But why are you now screaming in terror? Have you no king to lead you? Have your wise people all died? Pain has gripped you like a woman in childbirth. **10** Writhe and groan like a woman in labor, you people of Jerusalem, for now you must leave this city to live in the open country. You will soon be sent in exile to distant Babylon. But the LORD will rescue you there; he will redeem you from the grip of your enemies. **11** Now many nations have gathered against you. "Let her be desecrated," they say. "Let us see the destruction of Jerusalem." **12** But they do not know the LORD's thoughts or understand his plan. These nations don't know that he is gathering them together to be beaten and trampled like sheaves of grain on a threshing floor. **13** "Rise up and crush the nations, O Jerusalem!" says the LORD. "For I will give you iron horns and bronze hooves, so you can trample many nations to pieces. You will present their stolen riches to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth."

Revelation 6:1 - 17

6 **1** As I watched, the Lamb broke the first of the seven seals on the scroll. Then I heard one of the four living beings say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” **2** I looked up and saw a white horse standing there. Its rider carried a bow, and a crown was placed on his head. He rode out to win many battles and gain the victory. **3** When the Lamb broke the second seal, I heard the second living being say, “Come!” **4** Then another horse appeared, a red one. Its rider was given a mighty sword and the authority to take peace from the earth. And there was war and slaughter everywhere. **5** When the Lamb broke the third seal, I heard the third living being say, “Come!” I looked up and saw a black horse, and its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. **6** And I heard a voice from among the four living beings say, “A loaf of wheat bread or three loaves of barley will cost a day’s pay. And don’t waste the olive oil and wine.” **7** When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living being say, “Come!” **8** I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green. Its rider was named Death, and his companion was the Grave. These two were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals. **9** When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony. **10** They shouted to the Lord and said, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?” **11** Then a white robe was given to each of them. And they were told to rest a little longer until the full number of their brothers and sisters —their fellow servants of Jesus who were to be martyred— had joined them. **12** I watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood. **13** Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from a tree shaken by a strong wind. **14** The sky was rolled up like a scroll, and all of the mountains and islands were moved from their places. **15** Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. **16** And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. **17** For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?”

Psalm 134:1 - 3

134 1 Oh, praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, you who serve at night in the house of the LORD . **2** Lift your hands toward the sanctuary, and praise the LORD . **3** May the LORD, who made heaven and earth, bless you from Jerusalem.

Proverbs 30:1 - 4

30 1 The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh contain this message. I am weary, O God; I am weary and worn out, O God. **2** I am too stupid to be human, and I lack common sense. **3** I have not mastered human wisdom, nor do I know the Holy One. **4** Who but God goes up to heaven and comes back down? Who holds the wind in his fists? Who wraps up the oceans in his cloak? Who has created the whole wide world? What is his name—and his son's name? Tell me if you know!