

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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## THE BOOK OF MICAH

Cliff Goodwin

**D**ark times prevail, spiritually speaking, when God’s people allow themselves to become distracted and preoccupied with economic prosperity and political maneuvering. Goals and priorities become increasingly temporal in nature—tied to this present life and all the circumstantial trappings of it. Mix in military threats from surrounding enemies, and God’s people can be tempted to take matters in their own hands and forget about the power of their God. Such was the case in Micah’s day.

The Assyrian Empire was the dominant power whose shadow loomed over the Middle East during this time period. Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—kings over Judah (Mic. 1:1). Interestingly, only kings of Judah are given in the opening to his book. Micah’s ministry spanned the time which saw Samaria fall to the Assyrians, leaving intact only the kingdom of Judah. However, the southern kingdom would not be unscathed by the Assyrian war machine. Ahaz had turned to Tiglath-Pileser III for help in the Syro-Ephraimitic war. This would relieve some military pressure on Judah, especially that coming from Syria, but Assyria would ultimately prove to be no real ally at all (cf. 2 Kings 16:8-9; 2 Chron. 28:20-21). Later, after the fall of Samaria, Assyrian forces would surround Jerusalem, distressing Hezekiah and the people greatly (2 Chron. 32:1ff). Even Hezekiah, a righteous king overall, lapsed in faith at one point and attempted to appease the Assyrian enemy (2 Kings 18:13-16).

The times of Micah were turbulent politically to say the least. However, in contrast to his contemporary, Isaiah, Micah does not repeatedly address the politics of Israel, Judah, and her rulers. His prophecy denounces the ethical failures in society. The overarching lessons from Old Testament history are clear. When God’s people relied politically on those outside of covenant with God, often the religion of the

outsiders came to be introduced as well. As God’s people turned toward the religious practices of the heathen, their morals and ethics suffered also. All of this proved to be a deadly mixture, and surely Old Testament Israel stands as a warning and example to spiritual Israel today.

Micah was evidently a righteous man in the midst of a society that, to large measure, had turned away from their one true God and from His standard of righteousness. God “enlisted” this man into the service of prophetic ministry. His book opens with, “The word of the LORD that came

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# FROM THE EDITOR:

## THE BOOK OF NAHUM

Cody Westbrook

The name “Nahum” means comfort, compassion, or consolation. No doubt, the ancient Ninevites would find that ironic. Nahum has been called “The Single Minded Prophet” because his one topic was the destruction of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. No comfort or consolation for them could be found in that message.

Nahum wrote just before the destruction of Nineveh at the hand of the Medes and Persians in 612 BC. He was a contemporary with Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. Ironically, Nahum was who Jonah wished he could have been. While Jonah was commanded, against his wishes, to preach a message of repentance to Nineveh, Nahum’s burden was one of doom and destruction. Nahum 1 is “Doom Declared.” Nahum 2 is “Doom Described.” And Nahum 3 is “Doom deserved.” Note 1:3, 1:7, 2:13, and 3:19 as key verses of the book.

While the Ninevites would find no comfort in Nahum’s prophecy, Israel certainly could. Tucked away in Nahum’s pronouncement of doom is a message of hope (Nah. 2:11-15). You and I can still find comfort in that message. Consider four reasons why that is the case.

First, when God decides it’s over, it’s over. Assyria was a mighty nation, known for its violent domination and subjugation of other nations in the ancient world. But no amount of wealth or military might could stand against Almighty God and His determination to execute justice. Nineveh would learn that “the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm” (Nah. 1:3). Jehovah would “make an utter end of them” (Nah. 1:8). Nineveh would be “cut down” (Nah. 1:12), have their yoke broken (Nah. 1:13), their military, idols, and national identity destroyed (Nah. 2:1-7), and left “empty, void, and waste” (Nah. 2:9). No nation or people can stand when the Lord decides “Behold, I am against thee” (Nah. 2:13).

Second, God rules over the kingdoms of men. This truth is proclaimed clearly and loudly throughout scripture. Daniel 4:17 proclaims, “That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.” Asaph sang, “For exaltation comes neither from the east, nor from the west nor from

the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another” (Ps. 75:6-7). Jehovah “removes kings and raises up kings” (Dan. 2:21), appoints authorities (Rom. 13:1), and “reigns over the nations” (Ps. 47:8). Nahum’s burden against Nineveh is but one more potent reminder of this great truth. The Assyrians did not recognize or acknowledge Jehovah in any way, but that did not exempt them from His rule. No nation, even in the 21st Century World, is outside of the realm of God’s dominion.

Third, one cannot abuse God’s people and get away with it. Assyria had abused Israel just as they had other peoples of the ancient world. But their inhumanity did not go unnoticed and would not go unpunished. The Lord was against them (Nah. 2:13) because of their wickedness (Nah. 3:19), and He would bring them to ruin (Nah. 2:8-13). The enemies of God’s people should take note and remember the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. Jehovah is a “man of war” (Ex. 15:3). In His strength (Rev. 18:8) and justice (2 Thess. 1:6-10) He will right the wrongs executed against His people (Rom. 12:19-20).

Fourth, God relieves the pain of His people. Assyria had been God’s tool to punish Israel for their wickedness, but that punishment would not last forever. “...Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more” (Nah. 1:12). This was good news! “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace” (Nah. 2:15)! In Revelation 6:9-11 John hears the cry of martyred saints saying “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood...?” That question is answered in the following chapters of the book in a most powerful way. God’s people will be victorious. They will overcome (Rev. 12:11) because the Lord fights for them and will give them victory!

CW

# THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

Chase Green

Little is known about the prophet Habakkuk, whose name is only mentioned twice in Scripture (Hab. 1:1 and 3:1) and of whom no biographical information is given. His prophecy, set shortly before the time of the Babylonian captivity, is unique and interesting in that it includes a questioning of God and also a song in its final chapter.

The book opens in chapter 1 with Habakkuk questioning God: “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, ‘Violence!’ And You will not save” (verses 1-2). The theme is the familiar line of questioning found also in Psalm 37 and Psalm 73: wondering how long the wicked will “prosper.” The word “prosper” is in quotation marks here because although it sometimes seems as if the wicked prosper, in the end, their ways will surely lead to death (Pro. 14:12).

In verses 3 and 4, Habakkuk cites iniquity, trouble, plundering, violence, strife, contention, lawlessness, and lack of justice as evidence for the current plight of the land which prompted Habakkuk’s questioning. Readers in modern America cannot help but notice strong parallels to what is happening in our society today as well; thus, we might be tempted to ask similar questions as Habakkuk’s.

God’s reply to Habakkuk is found in verses 5 through 11. Essentially, God says that He is raising up a powerful nation, the Chaldeans (also known as the Babylonians), who in their military might would shortly bring judgment upon the land. Habakkuk then responds with a second line of questioning in verses 12 and following, asking, “Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die.” Although Habakkuk recognizes that God had appointed the Chaldeans for judgment, he questions why the evil Chaldeans should be allowed to punish God’s people.

In verse 1 of chapter 2, Habakkuk states that he will await the Lord’s response, and Habakkuk’s open-mindedness to the Lord’s will is admirable. The Lord then responds by stating the surety of the impending judgment, including the famous declaration: “but the just shall live by his faith” (verse 4). In the remainder of chapter 2, the Lord then describes in great detail the calamity of the wicked, concluding in verse 20: “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” In other words, when the heathen nations rage, God is still in control and ultimately will bring punishment

upon evil nations when punishment is due.

Chapter 3 is Habakkuk’s deeply poetic and prayerful song, acknowledging that Habakkuk has heard God’s message loud and clear. Of particular comfort are the imprecatory words of verses 12-13:

You marched through the land in indignation;  
You trampled the nations in anger. You went  
forth for the salvation of Your people, For  
salvation with your Anointed. ...

Although wicked nations raging is the story of human history, Christians can take comfort in God’s salvation with His Anointed Messiah, Jesus Christ, leading the charge. In the words of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, “His truth is marching on!” The book of Habakkuk concludes with the utmost optimism: “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills” (verses 18-19).

CW

# THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Johnie Scaggs, Jr

The book of Zephaniah contains many Biblical principles that we should learn. The name Zephaniah means “Jehovah shall protect.” It comprises three chapters and only has fifty-three verses. Still, the power behind these few chapters and verses ought to shake the very foundations of one’s soul as you read about the Lord’s anger because of Judah’s unrighteousness. “That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of wasteness and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zeph. 1:15). They had become so wicked that it seemed as if there was no one left to turn back to God. The prophet warns them that they will build houses, but not get to inhabit them, they will plant vineyards, but not get to drink the wine, (v. 13). Furthermore, he says, “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD’s wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: For he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land” (Zeph. 1:18). This wrath that will be poured out is all because of man’s sin. “And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the LORD: And their blood shall be poured out as

dust, and their flesh as the dung” (Zeph. 1:17). When men sin against God, there will be consequences. As Paul wrote, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). You cannot hide from God; there is nothing that He does not see nor anything He does not know. Moses reminded the children of Israel of this great truth. “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23).

Zephaniah challenges them to awaken and repent; if they would, God would hide His anger from them.

Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together,  
O nation not desired; Before the decree bring  
forth, before the day pass as the chaff, Before  
the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you,  
Before the day of the LORD’s anger come  
upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of  
the earth, Which have wrought his judgment;  
Seek righteousness, seek meekness: It may be  
ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger  
(Zep. 2:1-3).

Notice what he calls them to do: First, “Seek ye the LORD.” Second, “Seek righteousness.” Third, “Seek meekness.” The Lord knows that only the meek will seek Him. Those who have not humbled themselves and have not realized their total dependence upon the Lord will never seek Him or His righteousness. When men lift themselves up with pride, God will bring them down and cause them to understand that He is the Lord of all nations. He reminds them of this as He shows what will happen to those who go against His people in Zephaniah 2:4-11. God wants men and women who will have a contrite heart. David wrote, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Ps. 34:18). The great prophet Isaiah would also write, “For thus saith the high and lofty One That inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa. 57:15).

It is unfortunate that God’s children did not heed the warnings of God’s prophet Zephaniah. As we open the third chapter of this excellent book, we find that Zephaniah pronounces a woe upon them. “Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; She trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God” (Zep. 3:1-2). Notice that the woe is pronounced upon her because, First, she did not obey the Lord’s voice. Second, she did not receive the Lord’s correction. Third, she did not place her trust in the Lord. Fourth, she did not draw near her God. Furthermore, her princes, judges, prophets, and priests have all done violence to the law (3:4).

After all God has done for them, they steadfastly refuse to honour and serve Him. Zephaniah says the “...the unjust knoweth no shame” (3:5b).

This extraordinary book ends still with a message of hope for those who would return to the Lord: He will still be their God, and “At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: For I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, When I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD” (Zep. 3:20).

CW

## THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

Jordan Moore

As the short, two-chapter book of Haggai opens, we don’t read of God’s people being condemned for worshipping false gods. Nor do we read of them being given over to sexual deviance, intermarrying with foreign nations, or casually practicing divorce. Still yet, they aren’t found to be committing heinous crimes against one another, stealing from one another, or even so much as just being generally unkind to one another. No – after Cyrus, King of Persia, had declared that the remnant of God’s people could return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, things seemed to be relatively quiet on the “what-could-God’s-people-possibly-do-wrong-next” front.

So what were the people doing that warranted a rebuke from the prophet Haggai? Nothing. The prophet was sent to stir them up because they were doing – yes – nothing. Sure, they were doing some things. Haggai points out that they were ornately decorating their own houses. But they weren’t doing what they were supposed to be doing – namely, rebuilding the Lord’s house. For roughly sixteen years after their return, the temple continued to lay in ruin.

### The Main Problem

One might wonder if they simply didn’t know how to do the work or may have been financially unable. However, consider that the people were in a state of constant justification (“these people say,” 1:2 – always coming up with an excuse), continual procrastination (“the time has not yet come,” 1:2 –intentionally delaying responsibility), and improper prioritization (“you yourselves...dwell in your paneled houses,” 1:4,9 – they had the know-how and financial

resources to build their own house, but seemingly not the Lord's). Ultimately the main issue was apathy about the Lord and His work. Perhaps this problem seems benign compared to the atrocities and irreverence that the people of God had been involved with in the past. However, apathy is insidious because it lulls its victims into a sense of complacency – “what I’m doing (or not doing) isn’t that big of a deal when compared to what other people are guilty of.”

### **The Main Message**

Twice the prophet Haggai tells the people, “Consider your ways” (1:5,7). This call to action expected the people to stop. STOP and consider. Think about what you’re (not) doing! Again, the insidious nature of apathy is that a lack of caring breeds more lack of caring – to the point where one never actually gives thought to their current misgivings. The second word in the message: “your.” If apathy had a motto, it would be, “not my job/problem!” Rather than drawing their minds to look at the failings of the nations around them, Haggai instead implores them to consider their own shortcomings. What were the people to consider? Their ways. In the context, Haggai draws their attention to the fruit that has been produced (or lack, thereof) in their lives (1:6-9). The fruit they were producing was a result of the seed they were sowing – they were more concerned with the physical than they were with the spiritual.

### **The Main Solutions**

Their apathy was addressed with a three-pronged approach. First, listening to the words of God was instrumental in the mindset shift of the people (1:12). Second, a reminder of the righteous wrath of God was a motivational tool that yielded fruit (1:12). Finally, a resolute trust in the promises of God would prove to be beneficial (1:13). This approach proved useful, and the people of God began to work. When struggling with similar issues, people today would do well to given attention to these same three things – His words, His wrath, and His promises.

### **The Main Warnings**

Whereas Chapter One focused on bringing the people out of apathy, Chapter Two focuses on warnings to prevent them from falling back into the same apathetic abyss. Haggai first addresses the danger of “remembering the ‘good-ole-days’” when they may have been tempted to compare the glory of the former temple with the less-than-impressive state of the newly-rebuilt temple (Hag. 2:3; also see Ezra 3:12-13). Next, Haggai points their minds to the future to make sure they “don’t lose sight of the coming days” (Hag. 2:4-9). In other words, as was promised in the past to Abraham, to David, and to the people by the prophet Isaiah, the people had a coming Kingdom that would never be destroyed, and

an eternal Heavenly home to look forward to in the future. Finally, the people were warned of falling prey to a belief that “activity without purity” was acceptable to the Lord (Hag. 2:10-18; also see Matt. 23:26-27). The solution to their problem was not simply movement, but movement with the proper mindset – a love and respect for their holy God.

CW

## **THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH**

Neal Pollard

**T**he author of the longest book in the library of the Minor Prophets is identified in the first book of his prophecy as “the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo” (1:1). Only Zephaniah’s lineage is more exhaustively traced than Zechariah’s. His name means “God remembers,” and this takes on significance when the message of the book is considered. Studying Ezra and Nehemiah, one can deduce that Zechariah is of a priestly lineage (Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:4,16). Matthew 23:35 reveals that the prophet was martyred.<sup>1</sup>

The consensus view of the date of Zechariah is 520-470 B.C. Zechariah, along with Haggai, are commissioned by God to stir up the people in order to finish the work of rebuilding the temple. The reflexive command in Zechariah 1:3 is key to the book, that if they return to God He will always return to them. Of the three major periods of the Minor Prophets (the Assyrian Period of the 8th-7th Century, the Babylonian Period of the 7th Century, and the Persian Period of the 6th-5th Century), Zechariah belongs to the latter. It is often called the Post-Exilic Period, following 70 years in Babylon being freed and repatriated by Cyrus the Great.

The theme of Zechariah’s writing is the need of the people to rebuild their lives through obeying His Law. He accomplishes this primarily through the use of visions, of which there are nine in the first six chapters. Following these, the prophet engages in didactic discourse (or sermons) on the matter of spiritual renewal in chapters seven and eight. The final section focuses on two major Messianic events, His coming and judgment followed by an overview of what would be in His earthly ministry (note the phrase, “that day,” found 17 times in the final three chapters)(ch. 9-14).

<sup>1</sup> Though the Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24:20-21 is undoubtedly a different Zechariah. Jesus is revealing a fact supported by rabbinic literature (Blank, Sheldon H. “The Death of Zechariah in Rabbinic Literature.” Hebrew Union College Annual 12-13 (1937-1938): 327-346. Print.

Looking deeper into these three sections, here is what we find.

### **Night Visions (1:7-6:15)**

- The nations who punished Judah seem to prosper, but God assures them otherwise (1:8-17).
- The four horns destroyed, representing God's pledge to destroy those nations (1:18-21).
- Jerusalem will prosper, walled in by God's protection rather than stones (2:1-13).
- Joshua's replacement, "The Branch," will purge sin from the land (3:1-10).
- God will use Zerubbabel to finish rebuilding the temple (4:1-14).
- The "Flying Scroll" reveals God's verdict on the dishonest (5:1-4).
- The "Grain Basket" with the woman within illustrates the removal of wickedness from the land (5:5-11).
- The "Four Spirits" confirm that God's judgment has been realized (6:1-8).
- The coronation of Joshua as priest and king, symbolizing the Messiah (6:9-15).

### **Didactic Discourses (7:1-8:23)**

- Put greater focus on inner reform than outer reform (7:2-7).
- Put greater focus on social justice than your ancestors (7:8-14).
- God's favor would be evidenced by the people's restoration in the land (8:1-17).
- Fasting would be replaced with feasting (8:18-23)

It has been suggested that chapters seven and eight is a chiasm, the center of which is Zech. 8:8. Numerous others identify chiasms in other parts of the book and in bigger sections.

### **Messianic Prophecy (9:1-14:21)**

- The Messiah will be a warrior (9:8).
- The Messiah will be a humble king (9:9).
- The Messiah will be a liberator (9:11-15).
- The Messiah will be a strong, but gentle, shepherd (9:16-10:12)
- The Messiah will be a better judge and leader than they had (11:1-17).
- The Messiah will be a suffering servant (12:1-13:9).
- The Messiah will be a victorious king (14:1-21).

That this section is thoroughly Messianic is demonstrated by the ten times it is quoted by New Testament writers and applied to Christ (9:9 and Mat. 21:5 + John 12:15; 11:13 + Mat. 27:9; 12:3 + Luke 21:24; 12:10 + John 19:37; Rev. 1:7; 13:7 + Mark 14:27; 14:5 + 1 Th. 3:13; 14:8 + John 7:38; 14:21 + John 2:16), a total of five different inspired penmen.

Zechariah is written in apocalyptic language, with God revealing His word and will to His people through highly figurative and symbolic language. It contains a message of past deliverance, present responsibilities, and future hope. It reveals the perseverance of God in the face of a people who still struggle with sin, but who still have work to do. It promises that God will supply the answer through the One who will complete the largest restoration movement in history by offering Himself for sin.

CW

## THE BOOK OF MALACHI

Bryan Hodge

**M**alachi is a post-exilic book (Mal. 1:3 cf. Jer. 49:7-22; Eze. 25:12-14). The children of Israel have returned from captivity. The temple has been rebuilt (Mal. 1:6-ff). Time has passed, perhaps 100 years. Problems existed. Certain issues in this book seem to line up with the book of Nehemiah, e.g. marriage (Mal. 2:10-11, cf. Neh. 13:23ff), care of the poor (Mal. 3:5, cf. Neh. 5:1ff), and giving (Mal. 3:8; Neh. 10:32-39; 13:10ff). The book of Malachi is written to motivate them to change and do better.

### **Recognize God's Love (Malachi 1:2-5)**

These Israelites questioned God's love for them. God responded by saying I brought you back from captivity. I did not do this for Edom. Their land is still desolate. God was persevering Israel to bless not only Israel, but all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3; 28:13-14).

We need to recognize God's love. Life itself is a gift from God (Acts 17:25). Moreover, He wants to bless us (Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3-4).

### **Reverence God in Worship (Malachi 1:6-2:9)**

These Israelites did not properly worship. They, without delight, went through the ritual of worship. It was weariness to them (1:13). They made no real sacrifice but offered their diseased and damaged animals (1:8, 13-14). The people, and even the priest, did not keep God's way (2:1-9). They did not

honor the LORD before the nations (1:11, 13).

We need to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). We should sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16). We should give cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7). We should take the Lord's Supper discerning the body (1 Cor. 11:29). We should pray with our spirits (1 Cor. 14:14-15). We should listen to God's word with interest (Acts 10:33; 17:11).

### **Relationships Matter (Malachi 2:10-16)**

These Israelites were guilty of mistreating God's children. Specifically, they had mistreated their wives. They had divorced and remarried, even to those who followed other gods (2:10-16). God hated this (2:16). This rendered their worship unacceptable (2:13).

We should remember that God cares about how we treat one another (Matt. 5:23-24). He cares about how we treat our marriage partners (1 Pet. 3:1-7). Worship alone is not enough.

### **Remember Judgment (Malachi 2:17-3:7)**

These Israelites questioned God's justice. Why did He tolerate evil? Did He delight in evil? (2:17). Certainly not! His toleration of evil was actually an extension of His grace (3:6-7). Judgment would come (3:1-3).

We should remember that there will be a judgment day (Acts 17:30-31). His current toleration of evil is to give man an opportunity to repent (2 Pet. 3:9). We need to remember the end (cf. Ps. 73:1-17).

### **Refuse to Rob God (Malachi 3:8-12)**

These Israelites were guilty of robbing God. They did so in their tithes and offerings (3:8). This had brought a curse on them (3:9).

We should not rob God. In my estimation, this is one of the major things hiding the church in our day. Imagine a husband and wife with a household annual income of \$100-150K, but drop \$20-50 into the collection plate each week. Do we really think that God is pleased? Is this seeking first the kingdom of God? How are we using our money and time?

### **Reject murmuring (Malachi 3:13-4:6)**

These Israelites again are described as questioning God's justice (3:13-15 cf. 2:17). They openly spoke against it. Once more, they are reminded of a coming day of judgment (3:16-ff).

We should not murmur against God. It displeases Him (1 Cor. 10:10; Phi. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 4:9). It hides the beauty of Christianity to those outside (Phil. 2:14-15). Negative talk may discourage brethren (Deu. 1:28). Let us reject the temptation to murmur.

to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem" (Mic. 1:1). God had a word for His worldly and rebellious people in both Israel and Judah. This word came to Micah as it did to all the Biblical prophets—through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Thus endowed, Micah was both called and qualified to denounce the sins of his own countrymen. "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin," (Mic. 3:8). In such a ministry, Micah stood in bold contrast to the false prophets of that time (cf. Mic. 2:6-11; 3:5-7).

Living in such a time, and called to such a work, Micah evidently battled feelings of loneliness and woe. So many of God's faithful servants have experienced the same through the centuries. These feelings of Micah come through most clearly in chapter seven.

Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net (Mic. 7:1-2).

It seemed that everywhere Micah looked, there was not a God-fearing person to be found! Spiritual conditions were so bad among God's own covenant people that one could not even trust a close friend or family member (Mic. 7:5-6). Times were bleak, indeed.

Micah stands as a timeless example of what children of God are to do when they find themselves surrounded by sin and unfaithfulness. Cling tenaciously to the living God! Micah writes, "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me" (Mic. 7:7-8). The prophet knew that he might well suffer the indignation of God himself, and he admits that he is not guiltless (Mic. 7:9), but he followed the course set forth earlier in his book. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8). God will forgive the sins of His faithful children (cf. Mic. 7:18-19), and He will exalt in His own time them that are brought low (cf. 1 Pet. 5:6).



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## From the Director's desk



Trent Kennedy  
*Director*  
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It is amazing what a little understanding of the textual background (history, context, and geography) can do to help us see the Word of God with more clarity. One example of this is found in the famous Old Testament passage of Joshua 24:15.

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.”

This passage is plastered across homes all over the world. It can help us to dedicate our homes to the Lord, teach the world about free-will, and much more. Yet, the passage can “come to life” when we consider a bit of the background surrounding this text.

Joshua called the people to Shechem for this assembly (Josh. 24:1). Shechem is in the Nablus Valley along the Shechem Pass in the hill-country of Ephraim making it a central and strategic location. But, if you stood in Shechem and faced eastward, Mt. Ebal would be on your left and Mt. Gerizim would be on your right. This would have been the valley of choice that the Israelites had looked forward to since the sermon of Moses decades earlier as recorded for us in Deuteronomy 11:26-30. God would give them, in the promised land of Canaan, the ability to choose rebellion and cursing on Ebal, or obedience and blessing on Gerizim. As the book of Joshua closes, as the life and leadership of Joshua dims on the pages of Scriptures, Joshua stood in the shadows of those mountains and called on God's people to choose which way they would follow.

Bible Geography is still a foundational class at SWSBS. First-year students dive deeply into the history, culture, geology, geography, and more of the Bible lands. When they do, the Bible “comes to life” for them. And, it can for you too.

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