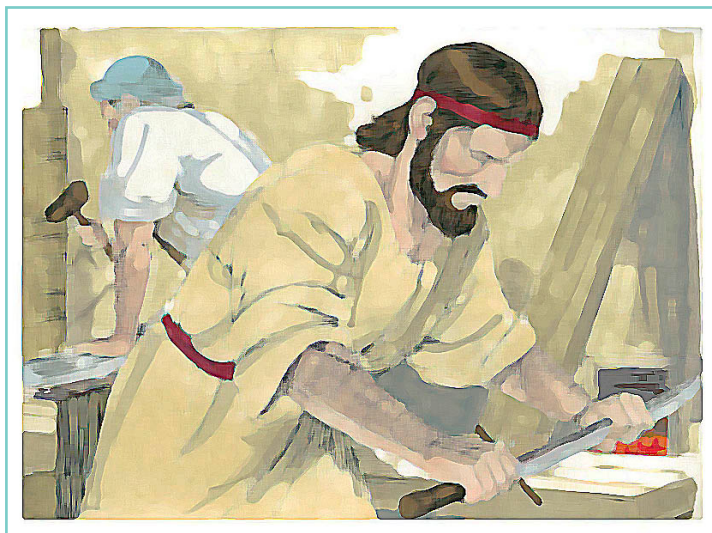


Lesson 8: Peace



Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

Micah is one of the Minor Prophets in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament: Prophets

The prophets spoke God's Word in many places and under many circumstances, even to leaders and kings among the unbelievers. God stood firm on his promise that he would never forsake his people and would one day send a Savior to deliver them from their enemies.

Biblical Genre: Prophecy

The prophetic books are often broken down into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. This designation is not a reflection of their importance in Scripture, but simply refers to the relative size of the books. Micah is one of the Minor Prophets.

His message alternates between words of judgment and words of hope, foreshadowing not only the exile and return, but also pointing forward to the coming of the Messiah, who Micah foretold would be born in Bethlehem of Judah (Micah 5:2).

Introduction

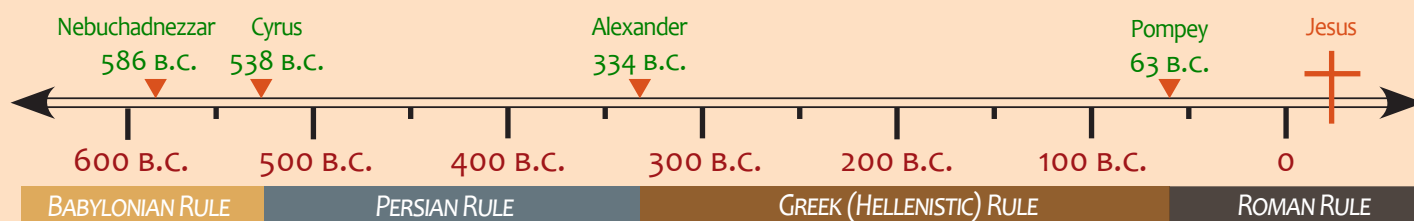
The Prophet Micah foretold of the great day when God himself would come to establish his kingdom of peace among the nations. In that day, he said, "they will beat their spears into pruning hooks and their swords into plowshares" — ending the economy of war forever.

Read: Micah 4:1-7

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

When in Time?

Nebuchadnezzar was the Babylonian king who conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C. In 538 B.C., Persia's King Cyrus wrote an edict that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. But that would not be the last time the Jews were conquered. In 334 B.C., Alexander the Great led his Greek army east and conquered the lands that had belonged to Persia. Later, in 63 B.C., the Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem just prior to the New Testament Era.



Discuss: Micah 4:1-7

1. Prior to the good news in today's lesson, the prophet Micah had first delivered some bad news to God's people. Why is it better to hear the truth (good or bad) than to simply hear what we want to hear?
2. The people of Israel and Judah suffered a great defeat that led to their exile in Babylon. Was this because God had given up on them? Was it because God was not powerful enough to save them? Or was there some other reason for their downfall?
3. In chapter 4, Micah starts out by saying, "It shall come to pass in the latter days..." What do you think is meant by "the latter days"? Is this prophecy talking about things about to happen, or things that won't happen for many years?
4. How was the image of people "beating swords into plowshares" a hopeful one for people who had suffered much from war? What was God saying?
5. Why is there such a strong emphasis in these verses on the desire for God to "teach us his ways" (v. 2)? In what practical ways does hearing and learning God's Word actually make our lives better?
6. Re-read verse 5. Do you think we need all people to agree on what is right before we can do it? Why is it important for us to obey God even if no one else does?
7. In verses 6-7, God speaks of the lame and afflicted and "those who were cast off." Have you ever felt left out or left behind? How does God's promise here let you know you are never alone? How might that help change your attitude and outlook?
8. Read 1 Peter 2:4-10. In what sense does faith in God make us a part of something much bigger than ourselves? How does following Christ take away our shame and give us a purpose?

Where in the World?

The area we call the Middle East is where the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe meet.

There were a number of major Iron Age empires that ruled this region. The most important were:

- a) The B _____
- b) The P _____
- c) The G _____
- d) The R _____



► On the map above, mark with an X and circle the area where Jesus was born and lived his earthly life.