

Micah

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Micah using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Reading the Prophets*—especially the section on Micah—will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§]And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶]Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||}that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||}and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all th tioning,¹⁵that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

Prepare

Read the Introduction to Micah, paying particular attention to the *Historical Background*, the *Message of the Prophet*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Micah to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Micah, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Micah as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:2–16.** In these oracles, since Samaria and Jerusalem have become strongholds of iniquity, how does the Lord plan to punish their sins? Historically, who carried out these judgments? Though Jerusalem was not taken in 701, what do the surviving *Annals of Sennacherib* state did happen?
2. **1:2.** To what is the world summoned to listen? How is the Lord's holy Temple in heaven indicated? To what is this celestial sanctuary the unseen counterpart?
3. **1:8–16.** In this funeral lament over Judah and Jerusalem, what route does the list of towns probably mark? What technique does the text display?
4. **1:10.** To whom is the saying "tell it not in Gath" attributed? Why should news of Assyria's capture of Judahite towns not be publicized in the Philistine city of Gath? What is the translation for the name Beth-le-aphrah?

For application

1. **1:2.** Why do human beings tend to ignore prophets who warn that God is not pleased with their conduct? Which modern prophets have been warning about the moral condition of society? Who is paying attention?
2. **1:5.** If Micah were prophesying today, which cities do you think he would indict as representing the sins of the country? The note for this verse singles out corrupt worship. What might he say corrupts our worship?
3. **1:7.** According to St. Paul in 1 Cor 3:10–15, what workmanship must those who preach the gospel employ to build upon the foundation of the faith? How will it be tested? How do his words apply to the preaching of the gospel today?
4. **1:10.** When the sins of Church ministers are publicly revealed, who rejoices? What benefits do such revelations provide for the Church as a whole?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:2.** Why is woe invoked on those who covet fields and houses? What is the inheritance to which the verse refers?
2. **2:6–11.** With whom is Micah contending? Who are the real "enemy" of God's people, and why?
3. **2:12–13.** With what is this prophecy concerned? How will the Lord regather the exiles of Israel from foreign lands? What does the context suggest that Micah envisions? How does Jesus seem to allude to this passage in Jn 10:1–18? How does St. Thomas Aquinas apply this passage to our hope of heaven?
4. **2:13.** Though "their king" is here identified as the Lord God, which ruler does Micah later describe? In a similar way, what does Ezekiel promise? What conjunction of the ruler's divine and human roles in the Incarnation does Christian faith see?

For application

1. **2:2.** If the desires for possessions is good in itself (CCC 2535), what makes coveting a neighbor's property a grave (i.e., mortal) sin? To what virtue does it stand in opposition?
2. **2:6.** When is the last time you heard a homily or sermon in which the preacher corrected his congregation for an abuse? If you have heard such a correction, how did the congregation receive it? In a Catholic parish, what would happen if the congregation rebelled against its pastor on account of such preaching?
3. **2:11.** For what qualities should a parish hope in a good preacher? What may be the spiritual fate of a parish whose pastor preaches only what his congregation wants to hear?
4. **2:12.** Read the note for this verse. In John 10:7–9, Jesus identifies himself as the gate of the fold. Why should there be only one gate? Why is Jesus the gate rather than someone else?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:5.** To which prophets is Micah referring? Of what does he accuse them? How will the Lord judge them? Why is "Peace" the signature message of these prophets? From what do true prophets not shy away?

Micah

2. **3:8.** What is Micah supernaturally empowered to proclaim? What did the divine Spirit thus enable his words to accomplish? Which other prophets were similarly conscious of prophesying by the Spirit? In the Nicene Creed, how is the Spirit identified?
3. **3:11.** Why is bribery in the courts condemned? What remuneration were priests commissioned to teach the Torah to the people supposed to receive? Where does Jerusalem's protection lie? How might the belief that Zion was inviolable have arisen?
4. **3:12.** What picture does Micah present of Jerusalem in the aftermath of divine judgment? Judging from the citation and interpretation of this passage in Jer 26:18–19, what kind of prophecy was this, and why? If the Lord's judgment against the city was not cancelled, what came of it? To what house is the reference?

For application

1. **3:1–3.** Why does the prophet use such graphic hyperbole in his message? Can you think of some examples when Jesus used hyperbole in his preaching? What message is the audience supposed to get from this technique?
2. **3:4.** How often have you prayed and received no answer from the Lord? According to the note for this verse, what is an obstacle to effective prayer? What are some other obstacles? If you do not detect an answer from the Lord, does that mean he is keeping silent?
3. **3:8.** According to 1 Cor 14:23–33, what is the context in which prophecy is normally exercised? For whom is prophecy intended? How would a prophet know that he is being inspired to prophesy? How would others present know that the prophecy is from the Lord (cf. v. 29)?
4. **3:11.** Although Jesus is always present in his Church, what danger does she face from a smug complacency that no evil will happen to her? What protection does she have from the kinds of punishment threatened against Jerusalem here?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1.** To what does the expression “the latter days” refer? Where was the Temple built? In the biblical world, how were mountains viewed? How is the mountain of the Lord's house to be considered the highest despite being lower in elevation than Mt. Scopus and the Mount of Olives?
2. **4:2.** When will peoples throughout the world converge on the Temple? To what did the name Zion originally refer? According to the NT, of what is the elevation of Zion, crowned with the city of Jerusalem, a historical sign? How can the Hebrew word *tôrāh* be translated? How is the going forth of God's instruction from Jerusalem fulfilled? According to St. Justin Martyr, who prophesied these things to come, and with what result?
3. **4:9—5:1.** With what are these prophecies concerned? What do the oracles marked by “Now” forecast, and to what does the vision of Daughter Zion's labor look ahead?
4. **4:13.** What does the process of threshing accomplish, and how is it done? What does the Hebrew for “devote” mean, and how does it apply to the wealth of nations?

For application

1. **4:1–2.** What is the purpose of a religious pilgrimage? If you have ever made such a pilgrimage, what was its effect on your spiritual life? If you have never gone on a pilgrimage, even to a site near you, what is to prevent you from making one?
2. **4:5.** How determined are you and your household to serve the Lord (cf. Josh 24:15)? How explicit is that determination? What does that service involve?
3. **4:12.** In Eph 1:3–14, St. Paul summarizes God's plan of salvation. To whom does it apply? As you look back on your life, what pattern can you trace of the Lord's plan for you? How does it seem to be unfolding for you? Where is it leading?
4. **4:13.** Threshing is sometimes used as an image of purification through suffering. How might it apply to the purification of the Church? How might it apply to one's personal life?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:2.** Where is Bethlehem, and what was its significance? What ruler does Micah see coming from Bethlehem? Where is Ephrathah? In the Gospel of Matthew, when did the chief priests cite this passage, and what happened as a result?

Micah

What expectation did other Jews of the NT period share? What could it mean that Israel's future ruler comes from the distant past? However, what does the text seem to assert? How does Christian faith find the solution to this mystery in the Incarnation?

2. **5:3.** Since the Lord gave David's kingdom over to destruction in 586 B.C., whose coming did its restoration await? Who is "she who has labor pains"? At what does Micah's depiction of her hint? What does the Book of Revelation use the language of birth pangs to depict? On what is this based in part?
3. **5:7.** Who are the remnant of Jacob? What does Micah insist about them? To what is God's rescue of the remnant compared?
4. **5:13.** To what pillars is Micah referring? What did the Torah command about these pillars?

For application

1. **5:2.** How does Mary's Magnificat reflect the Lord's tendency to use small and insignificant things, people, and places to accomplish great things, while ignoring more "important" ones? What unimportant person or event has exercised the most influence on your life?
2. **5:4.** In Jn 10:1ff., Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd and also the gate of the sheepfold. What does he say about the security of his flock? How far is he willing to go to ensure their security? For whose security are you responsible? How would you imitate the Good Shepherd?
3. **5:10–15.** Why does Jesus expect his followers to renounce all their possessions to follow him (cf. Mk 10:23–31)? What benefit is there in the spiritual life for the Lord to cut off from us the resources we have or on which we rely?
4. **5:13.** Against what kind of images is Micah prophesying here? Why is the Christian veneration of images not forbidden? What does the *Catechism* have to say about veneration of images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints (CCC 2129–32)?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **Essay: Covenant Lawsuit.** What does the covenant regarding the relationship between the Lord and Israel spell out? What is one way that God brings charges against violators of the covenant? In these and similar texts, how does the Lord initiate legal action through his prophet and press the case against his disobedient people? In biblical examples, what are some of the features of the prophetic lawsuit?
2. **6:6–8.** As Micah instructs Israel on God's priorities for his people, what does he say a relationship with the Lord demands? How do the rhetorical questions in 6:6–7 escalate? For what is the liturgy no substitute?
3. **6:8.** In a legal context, what does justice mean? In a personal context, what does it mean? What is expected in a covenant relationship? What is humility, and what is its opposite? As such, of what is humility the foundation?
4. **6:9–16.** To what is the city sentenced? Which city does the prophet target? How do both cities fit the prophecy?

For application

1. **6:3.** This verse is the basis of the list of reproaches sung during the Good Friday liturgy. What reproach would the Lord level against his people today? What return to the Lord have you made for all the good he has done for you?
2. **6:6–8.** Would your spiritual life improve if you multiplied devotional practices and penances? What problem in your relationship with the Lord would piling on more commitments solve? What instead would be a better solution? How would you implement Micah's recommendation in v. 8?
3. **6:14–15.** Which of your devotional practices seem to amount to fruitless effort? As you examine your conscience, what might the Lord be telling you through this lack of fruit? For example, whom have you refused to forgive? What other faults lie hidden that you have not addressed?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:2.** What is "there is none upright" a way of saying? When does Paul cite similar passages of Scripture?
2. **7:6.** What does strife within families, which are typically bound together with the strongest ties of loyalty, show? How does Jesus draw from Micah's words? Because he demands a personal commitment that takes precedence over kinship ties, what can adherence to the gospel do?

Micah

3. **7:7.** What does Micah refuse to do? Why does he cling to the Lord?
4. **7:8–10.** Whom does an individual speaking in the first person (I, me, my) address here? What does his speech announce? Who do the speaker and the enemy appear to be?
5. **7:18.** How does the Lord, the God of Israel, surpass all and show that he has no rival or equal? What wordplay does Micah's question involve? With the expression taken from Ex 34:7, translated "forgiving iniquity", what does the Lord reveal about himself to Moses? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, how does God show mercy? To what does the concept of a remnant refer? To what does the Hebrew term *hesed*, here translated mercy, refer?

For application

1. **7:2.** What evils in society most concern you? How often do they prompt you to utter cynical remarks in front of your family or neighbors? If you voice cynicism frequently, what hope do you bring others? If it is true that the mouth speaks what is in the heart (Lk 6:45), what is in yours?
2. **7:6.** Read the note for this verse. How have varying commitments to the faith caused strife within your family? How have you taken sides in the midst of such division? If speaking about religion at home seems counterproductive, what does refusing to speak of it solve? How do you resolve this dilemma?
3. **7:8.** How upset do you become with yourself when you sin? When you do fall, how quickly do you arise? What steps do you take to recover, especially if your fault is public?
4. **7:18.** How has God shown mercy toward you, especially in the face of all your sins? If he has been so merciful in the past, how will he regard you in the future? How has God shown delight in loving you?