

**The Spirit of Prophecy Series:**

Who Is Like...

**MICAH**

...**YAH!**

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# *The Spirit of Prophecy*

## **Introduction**

### **Prophecy...**

**As the word hangs there in the ether, what comes to mind? A hairy man in burlap, pointing his finger and shouting? A one world government? The end of the world? For many of us, the only thing we definitely associate with prophecy is a big question mark. Yet the New Testament contains some clear statements about prophecy. Jesus taught that all scripture, prophecy included, found its fulfillment in Himself (Luke 24:25-27). While every prophecy has an historical fulfillment relating to the circumstances in which it is given, its full meaning is only realized in the person and work of Christ. This holds true even of prophecies whose fulfillment we still await.**

**The “end times” seem to be a continual sources of curiosity and confusion among Christians. Mountains of books—fiction and non-fiction—have been written on the subject.**

**Movies have been made and remade. Every teacher worth his salt has weighed in. Theologians and fanatics alike have fastidiously woven scripture and world events into timelines. What has been lost in all of this is Jesus. Many have searched the prophets more diligently for the antichrist than for Christ, though the prophets themselves did not do this (1 Peter 1:10, 11). Wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilence, and persecution are clues in a cosmic “who-dunnit” instead of being seen for what they are: signs of *His coming* (Matt. 24:3-14). When Christ ceases to be the center and interpretation of the end-times, it is little wonder that there is so much confusion about them among believers.**

**To put this in theological terms, the chief value of prophecy lies in its Christology, not its eschatology. *The Spirit of Prophecy* is based on Revelation 19:10—“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The aim of this series is two fold: 1) to discover the testimony of Jesus in the words of the prophets; 2) by discovering the testimony of Jesus, to rescue the prophetic books from the carnal and even fantastical**

**interpretations which they have sometimes been subjected. Restoring the testimony of Jesus to the prophets also allows prophetic voices to fulfill their original ministry. God spoke through prophets to deal with the hearts of His people, to heal their unfaithfulness, to draw them back to Himself so that they might worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This ministry is largely lost when prophecy is treated as a way to decode current events. Only by lifting up Jesus will men be drawn to God (John 12:32, 33).**

**This is not to say that the interpretations offered here are the only ones possible. Hopefully, the ways of seeing Jesus in the prophets are as endless as God Himself. But if this series can cause the reader to think differently about the prophets, to search them for Jesus instead of end-times timelines, then it will have accomplished its purpose.**

# **Micah: Who Is Like Yah?**

## **An Incurable Wound**

**Micah opens with a crisis: God’s people have an incurable wound (Micah 1:9). Like a knife, their sins and lawlessness have cut them so deep they cannot recover. Various verses throughout Micah provide us with a laundry list of the offenses in question: idolatry, covetousness/greed, the mistreatment of women and children, drunkenness, and false prophecy, just to name a few (Micah 1:7; 2:2, 9-11; 5:14; 6:7). Even the leaders, priests, and prophets of Israel governed based on the operating principles of corruption and profiteering (Micah 3:9-11). But the wound went deeper than just behavior. Micah lamented that the wound “reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself” (Micah 1:9). Jerusalem—the place of David’s throne and the Lord’s temple—was the very heart of Israel, showing that this wound was mortal, to the very core.**

**God offered no emergency surgery, no defibrillator, not even a band-aid. God’s solution**

**to this wound was to put Israel out of her (and His) misery—“Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations. [...] Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets” (Micah 1:6, 3:12). Complete destruction was the only answer for Israel’s condition.**

**Historically, God worked the predicted judgment through pagan armies. Assyria, whose people had an especial reputation for violence, laid siege to Samaria, broke the will of Israel’s northern kingdom, and forcibly removed the Israelites from the land God had given them (2 Kings 17:22, 23). About 130 years later, the Babylonians burned Jerusalem and its temple to the ground (2 Kings 25:9). They enslaved the best and brightest Israelites, leaving the poor to sort through the wreckage of a kingdom that had once been the Lord’s (2 Kings 24:14).**

## **By His Wounds...**

**Micah's message was not for Israel only—  
“Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and  
all who are in it, that the Sovereign LORD may  
witness against you, the LORD from his holy  
temple” (Micah 1:2). We all have an incurable  
wound—the sinful nature inherited from Adam  
(Rom. 5:12). Our lives bleed out from that  
wound through a steady trickle of failures.**

**Like Israel, our old nature cannot be fixed,  
patched up, repaired, or made better in any way.  
The promise of judgment made to Israel was  
spoken for us as well: “Look! The LORD is  
coming from his dwelling place; he comes down  
and treads the high places of the earth. The  
mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split  
apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing  
down a slope” (Micah 1:3, 4). For those who  
persist in unbelief, these verses will be fulfilled at  
Christ's return (1 Thess. 1:6-10). But for those  
who receive Him, the Lord has already come  
down once before: “The Word became flesh and  
made his dwelling among us” (John 1:12-14).  
After coming down, the Lord's path led to the**

**cross where He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Here, Christ was made a sin offering. Sin was condemned in Christ's flesh, and God razed the Adamic race to its foundations (Rom. 6:6-7, 8:3). He plowed it under, leaving it barren and empty (Gal. 5:24). The judgment of the cross further fulfilled the judgment predicted by Micah (Micah 1:6, 3:12). By His wounds we were healed (Isaiah 53:5).**

## **False Religion**

**As we have said, idolatry was one symptom of Israel's incurable wound. Micah addresses at least two types of false religion: fertility cults and Molech worship. Fertility cults involved worship of various deities such as Baal or Asherah. Generally, these types of cults held that ritual sex-acts would ensure divine blessing on the harvest. Ritual sex happened between adherents or with priests and could be between members of the same or the opposite sex. Baal was represented by statues that were half man, half bull (bulls were symbolic of fertility). Asherah poles—large phallic statues—were also used in**

**fertility ceremonies and are condemned in Micah 5:14.**

**Molech worship was, perhaps, at the other end of the spectrum from the self-gratifying religion of the fertility cults. Like the worship of Yahweh, Molech required sacrifice but Molech was far more exacting. Not satisfied by the blood of bulls, goats, or other animals, Molech could only be appeased by the ritual immolation (burning to death) of a child. Jeremiah 7:31 provides a brief description: “They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.”**

**The practices of these pagan religions are shocking to the sensibility of most people. Nevertheless, it might surprise us to find that some of our own practices are on a continuum with Baal or Molech worship. Fertility cults made pleasing oneself a religious activity. Some types of Christianity, too, are all about what blesses or benefits me. A big reason Baal was worshiped was to ensure a prosperous harvest. In churches driven by the prosperity gospel,**

**believers pleasure themselves in the pursuit of God-blessed wealth and success. Teachings that say God has only victory for us because Jesus did all the suffering are tempting but do not have in mind the things of God (Matt. 16:21-24). We may also seek to gratify ourselves through spiritual experiences or use worship services as a means to an emotional high. There are also those who see no reason to be transformed by God; they go on doing whatever appeals to their sinful nature and justify their lifestyle of sin by claiming God’s grace and forgiveness (Rom. 6:1, 2). Finally, as Jesus said of religious leaders in His day, ministry can be a means to satisfy ourselves whether we seek success, achievement, prestige, or even money (Matt. 23:5-7; Luke 16:14, 15).**

**These and similar forms of Christianity present Christ without the cross. The passage wherein Micah mentions Asherah poles concerns the Lord’s promise to destroy false religion. The cure for today’s forms of self-pleasing religion is also judgment—the judgment of the cross. “For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written, ‘The insults of those who insult you have**

**fallen on me.’” (Rom. 15:3). But the cross must be more than something that happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago. We need the Holy Spirit to infuse our daily motivations with Christ’s crucifixion so that what we do is not for our own pleasure but for God and others (2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 5:13).**

**The exacting spirit of Molech also insinuates itself into the life of the church. Molech, it was pointed out, demanded that his worshipers give up their children to appease him. God gave up His own Son for us (Rom. 8:32). The contrast couldn’t be more stark. Anytime we believe God is requiring of us something other than what is provided in Christ we are serving Molech to some degree. Legalism—believing we are responsible for fulfilling God’s standards instead of trusting Christ to fulfill them—is probably the most pervasive and subtle form of Molech worship today (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 10:4). Asceticism is a blanket term for the belief that God requires us to purify ourselves through physical discipline, deprivation, or punishment. Extreme fasting, sleep-deprivation, ritually injuring oneself, and the like are ascetic practices in the spirit of**

**Molech-worship. Paul grants that ascetic practices “have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (Col. 2:21). Only our participation, by faith, in Christ’s death and resurrection purifies us and satisfies the Lord (Col. 2:20-3:5). Finally, we can emphasize our fellowship in Christ’s suffering to the exclusion of knowing Him in His resurrection (Php. 3:10). This mentality may lead us to think we are only godly if we go without, let people walk on us, or give up all our time caring for others and not ourselves. It is a mindset that stays in the lowest seat even when the Master beckons that we should move up to a better one (Luke 14:10).**

**Mixing the mind of Molech with Christianity leads to the cross without Christ: sacrifice is required of us without corresponding provision from God. Micah’s cure for Molech worship was to remind Israel of everything God had given and been to her:**

**My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery.... Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD (Micah 6:3-5).**

**Toward the end of this memorial, Micah asks, “Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:7). In other words, when you look at all the Lord has done for you, Israel, what would ever make you think He was requiring something more? Prophetically, Micah urges us to remember all that God has done for us in Christ and to consider: Will the fruit of our flesh compensate for Christ’s inadequacy? What would ever make us think God was requiring more than His Son?**

## **The Risen Temple**

**Demolition precedes construction. Plowing is followed by planting. God promised to destroy Israel’s incurable nature and the false religion of**

**that nature but the Lord did not intend to utterly annihilate his people. Micah 4:1-7 shows the hope and renewal promised by the Lord.**

***In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it (Micah 4:1).***

**We have cited Micah's prophecy that the Lord would turn the temple hill into a mound overgrown with thickets. Jesus joined this prediction to a promise: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:19). When Christ was raised from the dead, He established the Lord's true temple—His body—in fulfillment of Micah 4:1 (John 2:21). This temple is not just Jesus as an individual. Micah speaks of peoples streaming to the Lord's temple. All who believe into Christ rise with him "to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21).**

***Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD....He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The***

*law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD  
from Jerusalem (Micah 4:2).*

**The word of the Lord dwells richly in the body of His resurrection (Col. 3:16). It is by the word we are born of the spirit, by the word we are incorporated into Christ (1 Peter 1:23, Eph. 1:13). God’s word teaches us His ways and His paths. The word of the Lord goes out from us because, “Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart” (1 John 5:10). People from many nations are drawn to Christ through our testimony and are incorporated into the risen temple of His body.**

**The law is also written on the hearts of those who are part of the true temple (Heb. 8:10). The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus goes out to free people from condemnation and from the sin that enslaves them (Rom. 8:1, 2).**

*He will judge between many peoples and will settle  
disputes.... They will beat their swords into  
plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor  
will they train for war anymore (Micah 4:3).*

**The risen temple of Christ is characterized by peace. The premier sacrifice associated with this temple—the death of Christ—reconciled all things to God, “whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col. 1:20).**

**The cross also ended the war between the sinful nature and the spirit (Gal. 5:17). To be sure, sin dwells in our members and tries to draw us back into the war on a daily basis (Rom. 7:23). But there is no need for us to engage. As we believe what is true in the spirit—that our fallen nature (along with its passions and desires) was crucified with Christ—we walk in the Spirit and “will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:16, 24).**

**The peace of the true temple is not only personal and inward. Ephesians 2:14-16 says:**

**For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body**

**to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.**

**Paul is here addressing Jews and Gentiles but these verses allow a much broader application. The division that pervades human relationships—whether between individuals, groups, sexes, races, or nations—died with Christ (Gal. 3:28). Through the cross (to borrow language from Micah) God judged between many peoples and settled disputes. The New Man is one, and His members derive their identity from Him instead of from their race, sex, occupation, ancestry, preferences, or any other aspect of themselves. Again, this is the temple Micah prophesied would be raised above the hills (Eph. 2:21). All who stream to this temple leave self-definition and division behind.**

**Ephesians 2:14-16 also fulfills Micah 5:2, 4-5:**

**But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. [...] He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the**

**LORD. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace.**

**The cross, as we have just said, removed division and identity based on this-world designations (skin color, gender, citizenship, socio-economic status). Christ was raised from the dead not only as King of kings but as the new life of all who believe. His reign is not imposed externally but Ruler and ruled are one spirit, one life, one body. “Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3:11). Because He is all, because His kingdom stretches from the edges of the universe to the center of our hearts, He Himself is our peace.**

**Christ our King is not a tyrant but a shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). He doesn't Lord it over us but became slave of all when He gave up His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Our King secured our devotion by loving us first. His perfect love drives out the fear of punishment that causes us to regard earthly rulers with a certain amount of dis-ease (1 John 4:18). This dis-ease having been healed, we enjoy the deep**

**security that comes with the reign of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:7).**

*Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken (Micah 4:4).*

**As we saw previously, God warned He would turn Samaria into a place for planting vineyards. Through the resurrection, God planted the vine of His Son: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit” (John 15:5). The Lord would not have us afraid or worried about being fruitful. We are to sit under the vine of Christ. As we rest in Him, the fruit of the Spirit grows and matures in us (Gal. 5:22). Seasons of unfruitfulness or hardship should not move us from sitting under the true vine. These are merely times when our Father, the gardener, is pruning us to make us more fruitful (John 15:2). Instead of wasting energy on foliage that merely gives the appearance of growth, all of the vine’s spiritual sap will drive the ripening of fruit that will last (John 15:16).**

## **Trampling the Enemy**

**Micah 7:8-10 contains another promise of Israel's restoration, spoken to those nations whom God used to bring judgment on Israel:**

**Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. [...] Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the LORD's wrath, until he...establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness. Then my enemy will see it and will be covered with shame.... My eyes will see her downfall; even now she will be trampled underfoot like mire in the streets.**

**This was ultimately a prophecy to Satan, words for the time of Christ's burial, when He would not be able to speak for Himself. While Christ Himself never sinned, He did carry our sins in His body and bore the Lord's wrath (1 Peter 2:24; Rom. 8:3, 4). In his first sermon at Pentecost, Peter said this of Christ's resurrection—"God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it**

**was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Acts 2:24). Since Christ never sinned, He didn’t deserve to die. Death couldn’t keep Him!**

**Christ’s resurrection established His righteousness and covered our enemy with shame. “For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12:10, 11). This verse shows that Christ’s vindication is also ours. We have become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The enemy’s accusations are as groundless and as fruitless against us as against Christ because we are part of Him. Through the resurrection, we are the blameless feet of Christ, which trample the enemy (John 12:31; Eph. 1:22).**

## Who Is Like Yah?

**The name Micah means, “Who is like Yah?” Micah’s prophecy shows how God’s grace abounds in Christ and utterly swallows up sin, death, and Satan. Yah is short for Yahweh, the name of God meaning, “I Am” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus is the living image and fulfillment of this name of God, in all its significance—“I am [the Messiah],” “I am the bread of life,” “I am the light of the world,” “I am the good shepherd,” “I am the resurrection and the life,” “I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” “I am the true vine,” “I am a king,” “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”<sup>1</sup> In these and similar statements, Jesus shows that He brings this name of God to completion in endless ways. In view of God’s great salvation through Christ, we can only answer that there is no one like Yah—no one as majestic in holiness, as awesome in glory, or working such wonders as the death and resurrection of Jesus (Ex. 15:11).**

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<sup>1</sup> John 4:25-26, 6:35, 8:12, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1, 18:37; Rev. 22:13.

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**The Voice of One**

*...to know and preach nothing but Christ*

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