

PREFACE

“Thank God for this Sabbath worship and message from Micah. Thank Deborah Thomas for her labour. I am thankful that Deborah highlighted that we should not overlook the pastoral strand of prophecy. The theme of the message is the true prophet and his ministry in contrast to the false prophets and their message. There is also that pastoral strand to identify the spirit of the False Prophet in me that resists the ministry and message of the true prophet. I was struck by how the doctrines of the application of the law, preparatory work and doctrine of the remnant are intricately linked together as they are in the other prophetic books. In the book of Micah, these doctrines become more apparent in the light of the role of the true prophet of God sent to us. The harbinger, like John the Baptist, is to prepare us to receive the Lord. Deborah posed the question at the end of the message: how do we respond to the law? Our subjection to the law and preparatory work is linked to how we respond to the ministry of the true prophet of God. The right understanding of these doctrines directs us to have the hope of salvation that is found in Christ Yeshua alone. I am utterly depraved and there is no hope in myself to be delivered out of my pride and utter corruption. I thank God for this particular perspective brought to me to appreciate these doctrines in Micah.

I appreciate the development of the message as Deborah brought out Chapter 1 and linked it to Chapter 6 regarding the application of the law in God’s judgments against us. It is important to search my own heart. What are my transgressions? I ought not to brush it away and to be numb to the dealings of God. In receiving the application of the law, I have to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. In Chapter 6:9, Deborah linked it to the ministry of the prophet who comes in the power of the Spirit to declare the transgressions of Jacob and the sins of Israel. If I am lighthearted or if I don’t give thought to what my sins are, then I am quelling the voice of the Holy Spirit behind the application of the law through His servant and that is a very grievous sin. I felt the solemnity of that truth being brought to me. In every means of grace, especially at the place of preaching, God is showing me my sins. God is also speaking to me through providence (apart from the direct rebuke of the man of God) and I cannot ignore it. I may master the art of confessing my sins and be acquainted with the semantics of the Scriptures yet it does not mean that I have the conviction of sins. I glibly say that I have a whorish spirit without giving much thought to why I have such a spirit. In this way, I am resisting the work of the law. The work of the law is to crush me, frustrate me, and to show me that all that I trust in will ultimately fail me. However, I speak peace to myself.

I need to appreciate Micah 7 from the perspective of the true prophet. It is an Arminian mentality when I apply Micah 7 to myself or take the promise of God in verses 18-20 presumptuously. The prophet of God faces disappointment in his ministry even as he sees that “the best of them is as a brier and the most upright man is as a thorn hedge” (Micah 7:1-4). When pastor says, ‘I don’t trust you’, I used to think ‘why does pastor not trust me even though I attempt to be faithful?’ Now I see that pastor’s reservation is scripturally based. It is very humbling even as I consider the extent of the deception and conceitedness in me. There is the lack of the conviction of the doctrine of depravity. I am averse to applying the law to others. The tendency to trust in man is also a reflection of how depraved I am; that is why I cannot discern the corruption in and devices of others. It speaks of the spirit of the False Prophet in me. And therefore, I felt it so meaningful to see Micah 7:7 – “I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation”. It is the true prophet of God who expresses that hope in the Lord.

Thank God that before Deborah pointed us to Micah 7:20, she brought us to consider the ministry of Micah and his prophecy concerning Christ’s first coming and also the exact place of His birth (Micah 5). The context is important – it is recorded that king Hezekiah resorted to the prophet Isaiah. There is this second witness to the obedience of Hezekiah to Micah the prophet in the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:18-19). Through the testimony of the people who were among the people in Jeremiah’s time, they affirmed that God used Micah to prophesy concerning the sins of Judah and that Zion would be plowed as a field. Because Hezekiah hearkened and subjected himself to the law, Judah and Jerusalem were spared from the attacks of the Assyrian army. There is the typology of Christ in Hezekiah, that with His submission to the law, the church is being preserved. From Micah 3 to 4, I see that it is because of Christ that mount Zion is being established in the gospelic sense. It is because of Christ that deliverance comes to Zion. Christ Yeshua is exalted in Zion. When Christ rules in my heart, then there will be the deliverance from my sins and bondage of the will. The prophesy in Micah 7:20 that is being fulfilled is inexplicably linked to the birth of John the Baptist and the coming of Christ. If I want the prophecy of ‘that day’ to be fulfilled in my life, I cannot resist the prophet God has sent. I pray God forgive my hypocrisies in paying lip service to the doctrines that the servant of God has taught us. I pray that the promise in Micah 7:18-20 may also be made personal to me.

Providentially today, pastor is the one who gave the refreshment together with his son (Israel Thomas) and grandson (Isaiah Thomas Lovelace); thank God for three generations. It is a pilgrimage of faith. He has the burden not only of nourishing himself and his immediate family but also all of God’s people. I am thankful that

God has preserved His servant. Though he had a massive stroke 19 years ago, he is preserved. Because God preserved him, I am also preserved, so that I am not consumed by my own iniquity. Thank God for the grace, strength and power upon His servant to declare unto Judah her transgression and to Israel her sins. God's grace is sufficient for him considering the burden he has to bear. God also preserved Israel Thomas in the house of God. I felt it was an honest prayer on his part. Thank God for Isaiah Thomas and the prayer of his parents for him that he would have the Spirit of God and know the Messiah of the book of Isaiah. Thank God for pastor ending with Philippians 3 to spur us on in this sojourn. May God enable us to fulfil the divine mandate given to His servant and to us." Response of Rhoda Soh to Deborah Thomas' conveyance of the book of Micah, John Bunyan House, Johor Baru, Malaysia; 17 September 2017 AD