

Micah

1. Plea against corruption

November 19, 2009

All forms of government are susceptible to political corruption. Forms of corruption vary, but include bribery, extortion, and embezzlement. While corruption may start at an individual level, it can facilitate criminal enterprise such as drug trafficking, money laundering and even human trafficking, it is not restricted to these activities.

Corruption of all forms is rampant around the world, whether it is a superpower like America, or third world countries somewhere in Africa, as long as there are humans, there are corruptions by leaders.

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

Micah 1:1 The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Again like Nahum, we don't know much about the author of this Book – Micah. Micah's name is an abbreviated form of "Micaiah" and means "Who is like Jehovah?" like the English name "Michael". Actually, Michael originated from the Hebrew word "Micaiah El". Even though we don't know much about him, we can tell he had a strong sense of his own calling as a prophet.

Micah 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, And of justice and might, To declare to Jacob his transgression And to Israel his sin.

He was from the city of Moresheth which was located about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. V1 tells us that Micah was prophesying during the time of the last half of the eighth century, B.C. He was a contemporary of Isaiah in Judah and Amos and Hosea in Israel.

B. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

Society in Judah was rapidly changing from rural to urban. In defiance of the Law of Moses, wealthy greedy people were buying up small family farms and developing huge land holdings, which created serious problems for the poor. Having come from a farming community, Micah became a voice for the oppressed poor and rebuked the selfish rich people and the government officials who were in the wealthy people's payroll. Amos echoed the same message in his Book.

Micah saw the coming judgment of the Northern Kingdom under Assyria in 722 B.C. as well as the fall of Jerusalem and Judah under the Babylonians in 606-596 B.C. He sought to call the Jews back to faithful worship of Jehovah and sincere obedience to His covenant, but they refused to listen. He pled for social justice and a concern for the helpless, but the people would not repent.

C. THE LORD'S UPCOMING JUDGMENT

Micah 1:2-5 Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple. 3 For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place; He will come down And tread on the high places of the earth. 4 The mountains will melt under Him, And the valleys will split Like wax before the fire, Like waters poured down a steep place. 5 All this is for the transgression of Jacob And for the sins of the house

of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?

This portion reminds me of a court opening scene. When the judge enters the courtroom from his or her chamber, everybody in the courtroom rises – a symbol of the respect we have for a judge and the law that he or she represents.

But the Lord who is the Ultimate Judge did not come to them in the same manner as these earthly judges. He has all the evidence necessary and a complete knowledge to judge the people of Israel and us. He doesn't need to call any witness or confer with anyone.

Like the Israelites, some Christians who are chastened by the Lord would think that the Lord is unfair for judging them while all the corrupted people around them are doing fine and getting away with just about everything. The Lord starts with us first because He loves us and we are His children. Then He will judge others. And their punishment will be far worse than we can possibly imagine.

1 Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

According to v5, the kings of both kingdoms were leading their nations to idolatry. King Solomon was told by the law of Moses that he should not marry any foreign woman or have many wives. He disobeyed both and brought idolatry with them into his kingdom.

After his death, the kingdom was split into two. King Jeroboam of Israel established its own religious system in competition with the Mosaic worship in the temple at Jerusalem. The people in Southern Kingdom Judah were not much different. Though they had a holy temple, their hearts were filled with the idolatry of the false gods of Canaan.

When the government and the people are both corrupted in their spiritual conditions, you cannot expect anything else to be right in their society. When the President of the United States of America declared that he appreciates the influences of the religion of Islam and claims that America is not a Christian nation, you have to wonder why God would not judge this nation right now. But He is judging her by allowing her to decay all the way.

D. THE INCURABLE WOUNDS

Micah 1:6-9 "Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field, Places for planting a vineyard; I will pour down her stones into the valley, And I will uncover her foundations. 7 All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, And all her pay as a harlot shall be burned with the fire; All her idols I will lay desolate, For she gathered it from the pay of a harlot, And they shall return to the pay of a harlot." 8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals And a mourning like the ostriches, 9 For her wounds are incurable. For it has come to Judah; It has come to the gate of My people-- To Jerusalem.

The Lord threatened to devastate His treasured cities. Assyria virtually annihilated Samaria in a horrendous three-year siege. Ancient armies would systematically shatter city walls down to their foundation stones.

Our only incurable wounds are the ones we refuse to bring to God. With Him, all things are possible, but when we refuse to confess our sin to Him, then our wounds are incurable. Consequently, the Lord extends His chastisement period longer. We just cannot outsmart or outlast our all knowing and everlasting God.

From v10-16, Micah used a series of puns based on the names of the cities and their similarity in sound to familiar Hebrew words. For example, "Gath" is similar to the Hebrew word for "tell." So he wrote, "Tell it not in Gath." Beth Ophrah means "house of dust." So he wrote, "Roll in the dust." The people of Shaphir – "pleasant, beautiful" – would look neither beautiful nor pleasant as they were herded off as naked prisoners of war.

E. THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE

Micah 2:1-5 Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, Because it is in the power of their hand. 2 They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, A man and his inheritance. 3 Therefore thus says the Lord: "Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, From which you cannot remove your necks; Nor shall you walk haughtily, For this is an evil time. 4 In that day one shall take up a proverb against you, And lament with a bitter lamentation, saying: 'We are utterly destroyed! He has changed the heritage of my people; How He has removed it from me! To a turncoat He has divided our fields.'" 5 Therefore you will have no one to determine boundaries by lot In the assembly of the Lord.

Do you ever wonder why God chose Israel to be His chosen people? We can get an answer from Deuteronomy 7:

Deuteronomy 7:7-9 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

God chose the nation of Israel to be the people through whom Jesus Christ would be born – the Savior from sin and death. God first promised the Messiah after Adam and Eve's fall into sin. God later confirmed that the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus Christ is the ultimate reason why God chose Israel to be His special people. God did not need to have a chosen people, but He decided to do it that way. Jesus had to come from some nation of people, and God chose Israel.

However, God's reason for choosing the nation of Israel was not solely for the purpose of producing the Messiah. God's desire for Israel was that they would go and teach others about Him. Israel was to be a nation of priests, prophets and missionaries to the world. God's intent was for Israel to be a distinct people, a nation who pointed others towards God and His promised provision of a Redeemer, Messiah, and Savior.

For the most part, Israel failed in this task. However, God's ultimate purpose for Israel – that of bringing the Messiah into the world – was fulfilled perfectly in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Privilege brings responsibility, and responsibility brings accountability. The prophet held the government and people of Israel accountable for two particular sins: covetousness and listening to false prophets.

The Mosaic Law required that the land remain with the families and within the tribes. If they disobeyed Him, they defiled the land and invited His judgment. If anybody sold family property, it was only until the next Year of Jubilee, at which time all land reverted back to the original owners. This arrangement kept the rich from oppressing the poor and helped to stabilize the economy.

But the greedy wealthy people in Micah's day were bent on acquiring large estates on which they could enslave the poor and, in turn, they make huge profits with little investment. So they made their ruthless plans in bed at night and then got up early the next morning to carry them out with the help of the government officials who were in their pockets.

It mattered little to these greedy men that they took away farms illegally and evicted families from their homes mercilessly. They practiced the world's version of The Golden Rule: "Whoever has the gold makes the rules." They forgot that the Lord owned the land, the Lord made the laws, and the Lord has compassion on the poor and the oppressed.

Does it sound familiar to you? Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have given contributions to lawmakers currently sitting on committees that primarily regulate their industry: The House Financial Services Committee; the Senate Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Committee; or the Senate Finance Committee. The others have seats on the powerful Appropriations or Ways & Means committees, are members of the congressional leadership or have run for president. From 1991 to 1998, Barney Frank was in a homosexual relationship with Herb Moses, who was an executive at Fannie Mae.

Micah 2:6-11 "Do not prattle," you say to those who prophesy. So they shall not prophesy to you; They shall not return insult for insult. 7 You who are named the house of Jacob: "Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good To him who walks uprightly? 8 "Lately My people have risen up as an enemy-- You pull off the robe with the garment From those who trust you, as they pass by, Like men returned from war. 9 The women of My people you cast out From their pleasant houses; From their children You have taken away My glory forever. 10 "Arise and depart, For this is not your rest; Because it is defiled, it shall destroy, Yes, with utter destruction. 11 If a man should walk in a false spirit And speak a lie, saying, 'I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,' Even he would be the prattler of this people.

Just as the false prophets attacked Jeremiah and Amos for preaching God's truth, so the false prophets attacked Micah for faithfully declaring the message of God. These men held onto a shallow theology that had no place for either sin or repentance.

Many people think that as long as they attend church once in awhile, they think that God is obligated to bless them. They don't even entertain a thought of obeying the Lord according to the Word of God. They do whatever they want to do and expect the Lord to bless their wishes and desires. In my opinion, it is their pastors' faults.

As these Israel false prophets only declared easy listening messages to their people, many pastors and teachers talk about heresies to the people who want only to hear what their itching ears desire.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

What these counterfeit religious leaders forgot was that God's covenants involve precepts as well as promises, obligations as well as blessings. Merely going through the motions of religion isn't the same as worshiping God "in spirit and in truth". Anybody can join the crowd and be a part of some popular religious movement. But it takes devotion, prayer, obedience and submission to worship God with reverence and godly fear.

F. COMFORT IN GOD

Micah 2:12-13 "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, Like a flock in the midst of their pasture; They shall make a loud noise because of so many people. 13 The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it; Their king will pass before them, With the Lord at their head."

Comfort without true repentance is only giving a false hope. But conviction without hope creates only hopelessness, like performing surgery without providing healing.

Micah reminds the people about the faithfulness of God if they just obey Him.

G. APPLICATION

Compromise to corruption is a silent effective weapon satan uses against us.