

### 3. To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God

December 17, 2009

The Book of Micah isn't exactly a household name in America, even among the majority of Christians. Too bad. Though obscure, the ancient prophet had his stuff together. Eclipsed by the much more famous prophet Isaiah, who ministered among the elite, Micah took God's message to the streets of Judah southern kingdom.

Micah had a deep suspicion of phony religion. He saw greed in the hearts of the leaders of the kingdom of Judah, which prompted him to warn the common folks not to be deceived by religious pretense among nobility. In true prophetic style, Micah comforted the afflicted and afflicted the comfortable. He condemned sin. He exposed performance-based piety. He upheld the cause of the oppressed. He predicted the fall of the nation. And he did it all at the risk of his own life.

As we read OT history and prophecies as well as NT Gospels and theologies, we realize how important it is for all of us to be obedient to the Lord. God had raised up Israel to bring blessings to the whole world, because it was through Israel that the Savior would come. God has raised up born-again Christians to bring blessings to the whole world, because it was through us that the Savior Jesus Christ's message would be proclaimed.

This third portion of Micah is almost like watching a courtroom drama. The Judge, our God declared the indictment in 6:1-8, pronounced the sentence in 6:9-7:6 and then graciously promised mercy in 7:7-20. This message again applies in our lives.

#### A. THE INDICTMENT

*Micah 6:1-8 Hear now what the Lord says: "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, And let the hills hear your voice. 2 Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's complaint, And you strong foundations of the earth; For the Lord has a complaint against His people, And He will contend with Israel. 3 "O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me. 4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5 O My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled, And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, From Acacia Grove to Gilgal, That you may know the righteousness of the Lord." 6 With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah pictures a court of law, with Israel "on trial" before the Lord. In the presence of unshakable witnesses – the mountains and the hills and the strong foundations of the earth, the court comes to order. In His court, God will bring His case – His complaint against Israel. God has done nothing but good to Israel, and has been repaid with rejection and rebellion.

The sins of the people were hidden behind a veneer of religious activity – routine worship that didn't come from their hearts. Micah's contemporary, the Prophet

Isaiah, told the people that the nation was sick from head to foot in Isaiah 1, but wouldn't admit it. They were like the patient who asked the doctor to retouch his X rays so he wouldn't have to endure cancer surgery. Their self-deception didn't cure them, rather it made them worse.

In v4-5, God presents His case with the provision, protection and power He made for the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt. He protected them from the Egyptian army's threat; He provided them foods from heaven and their clothes had never worn out. With His power, He turned Balaam's curse to blessings for them. But when they chose to follow worthless idols, He allowed their actions to lead them to curse.

While we shouldn't live in the past, we must learn from the past, or we'll commit the same mistakes of the past. Please remember this: those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Because Israel forgot God's mercies, they also ignored God's commandments. The result was a hard heart that deliberately rebelled against God's will.

But in v6-7, instead of confession and repentance, they asked how much it would cost them to make it up. We get the impression that these people were interested in bargaining with God and "buying Him off," because they kept raising the bid. It shows how shallow their spiritual life really was and that they were ignorant of their enormity of their sin and the high cost of forgiveness.

Doesn't that sound familiar to you? Some people try to negotiate with God for their sins. They think that everything has a price including God's forgiveness and mercy. What they don't realize is that God already owns everything including their puny lives. What can they possibly offer that He does not have?

Prophet Micah teaches us three simple principles:

*Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to (1) do justly, To (2) love mercy, And to (3) walk humbly with your God?*

**1) Do justly:** Treat others the way we want to be treated. If all of us do this, we don't have to worry about any crime. Unfortunately, no human does. But the believers of Jesus should be better than the others.

**2) Love mercy:** We cannot say that we have mercy when we are not willing to forgive others who offend us. We need to give mercy to others the same measure we want to receive from the Lord. For my case, a lot from the Lord so I need to love to show mercy to others.

**3) Walk humbly with your God:** Humility must be in an individual Christian's heart rather than on the lips. Then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

God does not look for big-time, external displays. He does not require slick public performances. Faith is not a long series of religious performances or a pile of pious things. All God asks for is simple faith.

## **B. GOD'S PUNISHMENT FOR ISRAEL'S INJUSTICE**

From v9 through 16, the Lord deals with Israel's elites who used their positions and powers to accumulate their wealth illegally at the cost of the poor people's lives. Tell

me that this does not apply to what is happening now in America as well as other countries.

*Micah 6:13-15 "Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, By making you desolate because of your sins. 14 You shall eat, but not be satisfied; Hunger shall be in your midst. You may carry some away, but shall not save them; And what you do rescue I will give over to the sword. 15 "You shall sow, but not reap; You shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; And make sweet wine, but not drink wine.*

God's judgment against Israel's elites is designed to frustrate their desires and leave them as physically empty as they were spiritually.

If the Lord has not saved us, we have to wonder where we would be spiritually and physically. Who knows what we would do. We would be no different than these Israeli people. Some of us might even be on a six o'clock news program or America's Most Wanted. Praise the Lord for His indescribable Gift, Jesus Christ!

### **C. THE PROPHET'S SORROW FOR ISRAEL'S SIN**

In v1-6 of chapter 7, Micah exclaims the sinful state of the land and the coming judgment from the Lord. But he still find hope in the Lord, not in the people in v7.

*Micah 7:7 Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me.*

As we look at this country USA's situation, it is easy for us to lose hope. Each hour brings one bad news after another from the Congress, the Senate, the White House and the economy, etc. We throw off our hands and cry out to the Lord, "How long, Lord?" It is not very long, but it is not the time yet. While we still have jobs to do – proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to as many lost sinners as we can, we can have hope in Him who is more than willing to relent as He did to the people of Nineveh through the reluctant prophet Jonah.

This God-based hope comprises the rest of Micah's message as he predicts Israel's future restoration after judgment and repentance in v8-9, her triumph and dignity, and her enemy's shame in v10-13.

In v14-17, Micah prays that God will shepherd His people as that will lead them out of darkness into light and make their enemies fear the Lord.

*Micah 7:18-20 Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. 20 You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.*

"Who is a God like You?" reminds us of the meaning of Micah's name, "Who is like Jehovah?" He is a God who pardons sin, forgives transgressions, and delights in showing mercy. He shows compassion to His people and deals with their sins with finality.

### **D. CLOSING THOUGHTS**

Some Christians live the most unproductive lives because they choose not to ask the second question Saul of Tarsus who later became apostle Paul, asked to Jesus on the

way to Damascus to persecute the Christians there in Acts 9. The first question was "Who are You, Lord?" Then he asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

When a person becomes a Christian, he receives Jesus into his heart as the Savior. In many cases, unfortunately, it stops there. They don't want Him to be their Lord and Master in their lives. In other words, their eternal fire insurance is paid up and they don't care to be His obedient followers.

They want to do what they want to do – however their feelings dictate what they would do. When I get to meet these kind of people, I ask them if they sought after the Lord's will for whatever the thing they are planning to do. They look at me as if I am a foreigner and speak a language that cannot be understood. Imagine that? They forget that we are no longer for our own, but we should live for Jesus alone.

Throughout this Book, we see Micah speaks to the Lord and listens to Him as the Lord speaks. The true relationship between God and His believers comes from their dialogue, not monologue. We cannot and should not come to the Lord and spill our prayer requests, hop up and walk away. That is a monologue. Let's admit it, we are very good at it. We don't wait enough to hear from Him. It is no wonder why we don't know His will for our lives most of the times.

The better we know the promises and covenants of God, the more peace we will have in our hearts when things around us fall apart. No matter how dark the day, the light of God's promises is still shining. No matter how confusing and frightening our circumstances, the character of God remains the same.