

Introduction

Tonight we begin our study of the Old Testament book of the prophet Micah.

1:1 Micah Of Moresheth

There are a lot of Hebrew plays on words in this book, the first topic of the book is the introduction of Micah, whose name means, "Who is like God?" The last topic of the book asks,

Mic. 7:18 Who is a God like You...

Micah was from Mo-REH-sheth, around 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of Micah also being a prophet (Jer. 26:18), and even quotes Micah 3:12.

In The Days Of Jotham

Micah's book is that which the Lord spoke to him during the days of three kings of Judah - Yo-THAWM, Aw-KHAWZ, and Hezekiah, making him a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea (Isa. 1:1; Hos. 1:1) and putting his ministry in the eighth century BC (2Kings 15-20).

Samaria And Jerusalem

Micah prophesies regarding that which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. These two cities are the capital cities of the two Israelite kingdoms. Remember that after the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel was torn apart by civil war. Jerusalem was the capitol of the southern kingdom of Judah, and Samaria became the capitol of the northern kingdom of Israel.

1:2-4 God's Judgment

Micah was telling everyone that God was going to come forth in judgment. He was going to step on the high places. The high places were where people performed idol worship. Sacrificing and burning incense (1Kings 3:3) to false gods like BAH-al (Num. 22:41), Kem-OSHE and Molech (1Kings 11:7).

The Lord promised in Leviticus 26 that if the Jews did not obey the

Lord and fell into idolatrous apostasy,

Lev. 26:30 "I then will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and heap your remains on the remains of your idols..."

Israel had fallen into idolatry, had not repented, and so the fulfillment of this promise was coming.

1:5-7 The Rebellion Of Jacob

God was bringing judgment because both of the capitol cities were guilty. Samaria is called the rebellion of Jacob, and Jerusalem the high place of Judah. God is speaking to these leading cities in the same way he would speak to Washington DC about the sin in the United States, or Baghdad about the sin of Iraq.

Samaria is focused on first, for that city's sin had gone on longer without repentance.

1:8-9 Micah's Reaction

Micah doesn't respond to coming judgment by cheering it on. He doesn't say, "Go get 'em, Lord! Smash 'em to pieces!" No, instead he said that knowledge of this approaching calamity made him cry and mourn. He was grievously saddened at the fact that his people were going to suffer.

A lot of times, we read of God's final judgment to come upon the earth in places like the book of Revelation, and we say, "I'm glad I'm not gonna be here! Man, I can't wait to see all of those Christ-rejectors toasted to a crisp!" We hear studies about the last days, and get excited about the end times approaching. But we must not be so callous. Many millions will suffer and die because of sin.

I think of Elisha in the book of 2Kings. When he looked into the eyes of Khaz-aw-ALE, the Bible says,

2Kings 8:11-12 ...the man of God wept. Khaz-aw-ALE said, "Why does my lord weep?" Then he answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons of Israel: their strongholds you will set on fire, and their

young men you will kill with the sword, and their little ones you will dash in pieces, and their women with child you will rip up."

Unlike many who study prophecy and say, "Alright!" we are to weep over the destruction to take place. Micah was crying, not cackling. He was saddened, not celebrating.

1:10-15 Various Places

As Micah refers to each of these cities, they really roll off his tongue. Each of these phrases either rhyme, sound alike, or are plays on words. For example,

- "Bayth Le-af-RAW" means "house of dust." Micah tells them, "At the house of dust, roll yourself in the dust."

- "Shaf-EER" means "pleasingly beautiful," but they would be shamefully naked.

- "Bayth Haw-AY-tsel" is "the House where some has been set aside for you." But in the house of support, God will take away their support.

- "Achzib" means "deceit," and they would be a lie to the kings of Israel. That comes out in Hebrew as "Ak-ZEEB Ak-ZAWB."

1:16 Make Yourself Bald

Micah tells the people to make themselves bald, to cut off their hair. This was not to show godly repentance, but their true nature. You see, cutting off the hair to show sorrow and lament was something that the idolatrous nations did. God had told them not to do this, saying,

Lev. 21:5 "They shall not make any baldness on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts in their flesh."

Isaiah spoke about the mourning of the Moabites,

Is. 15:2 They have gone up to the temple and to Dibon, even to the high places to weep. Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba; Everyone's head is bald and every beard is cut off.

Micah is telling them that the children they have conceived in their immoral idol worship will come out of the womb and go right into exile.

2:1-5 Payment For Scheming Evil

Not everyone was worshiping idols. Many had just forsaken the commandments and gone off into evil. At night, they would think of how they could sin the next day. "Who can I steal from? Who can I con out of their money? How can I take someone's land?"

The evil thought of how they could bring calamity on other families. God is saying that He is planning on their calamity. He is going to take their portion, and remove their own land from them.

2:6 Do Not Speak Out

I don't think that the word "so" should be inserted here, for it seems to confuse the thought. Micah is being told by others not to speak out.

Throughout history, the righteous have been told during unrighteous times, "Don't make waves, just keep quiet. Stop stirring up such trouble." People have tried to tell me not to preach about this issue or that. "It's too controversial, you're stepping on too many toes." But like Isaiah, I must say,

Is. 62:1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning.

2:7 Are These His Doings?

There were people in Micah's day saying, "God is merciful and loving, and we're doing fine. Guys like Micah who talk about judgment are just troublemakers. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." But Micah is telling it to them honestly...

2:8-9 Oppressing The Helpless

The Israelites weren't walking uprightly. God's perspective was that they were acting like an army - an army marching not against another nation, but against the weak and helpless. Women, children, and travel-

ers were being harmed as if they were the enemy.

2:10 No Place Of Rest

The Jews were going to be driven out of the Promised Land because of their sin. God had brought them into this land to enter His rest. But they had entered the land and polluted it with their sin.

2:11 The Spokesman Of Liquor

Micah was being ignored and rejected. But he says, "If someone came to you and said, 'God wants all of us to get drunk today,' then you would listen to him. He would be your spokesman."

The masses often will only hear what they want to hear. And the path to popularity is to simply tell the people what they want to hear. As we have read many times before, this will only continue to increase...

2Tim. 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires

Who is the spokesman for our society? The Bible or the beer companies? Quote the beginning of a few Scripture verses, and see how many people can complete them. Now, quote the beginning of the beer slogans and watch the 100% accuracy...

- This Bud's... for you
- Less filling... tastes great
- When you say Budweiser... you said it all
- From the land... of sky blue waters

Mic. 2:11 "If a man ... (had) said, 'I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor,' He would be spokesman to this people."

2:12-13 The Sheep Assembled, Then Breaking Out

Even as God is telling Israel that they will be judged, He is maintaining His merciful righteousness for a future hope. As with every generation, God is preserving Himself a remnant. And in the future, He will

be their Shepherd and their King. After they are scattered, He will gather the remnant together and lead them. No walls will prevent them from moving, no gates will be shut before them. God Himself will be at their head.

3:1-4 Rulers Hating Good

The leaders of Israel are being held to account. They, of all people, are to know justice. But they hate good and love evil. They abuse the people and put some of them to death. But when the Assyrians come in attacking, they will cry out to God. "Help us! Save us, O Lord, for we are calling out to You!" But God will not answer them.

God refuses to be a God of convenience. A genie in a bottle that lets you sin as much as you want, but then answers your cry of distress in times of trouble.

3:5-7 The Prophets Lead People Astray

There were many preachers and prophets in Micah's day, but like the people, they were apostate - they had fallen away from the truth. How did they know what to preach? Easy - wherever there was profit to be made. How did they know what to preach against? Where there was no profit to be made.

When it put food on the table, the prophets would cry, "Peace!" But when a group of people wasn't adding anything to them, they would preach against them. Such is also true in many churches today. Pastors and preachers know that the church's board of trustees sign their paychecks, so they don't make them mad. They preach to please. On the other hand, the single mom on welfare who visits the church has nothing financial to offer, so the "minister" has no problem preaching about the evils of society's poor and promiscuous population.

Like those in Micah's day, every modern minister will someday give an account for every message they have preached. And many of us will be ashamed and embarrassed. We will cover our mouths in horror when we see the motives that molded our messages.

3:8 Micah Filled With The Spirit

Micah was completely different than those false prophets. He was filled with the Spirit's power. He would speak it accurately and unashamedly. He would preach to the people about their rebellion and sin. Regardless of how unpopular he was, he would continue to do so.

3:9-12 Zion Will Be Plowed

The rulers of the Jews thought that they had an unconditional promise of the Lord being in their midst. Regardless of how they twisted justice and righteousness, they believed that they would always be blessed.

I find attitude to be prevalent among Americans today. "We're America, and it's always going to be like this. We're the only superpower in the world, we're the richest among the nations. Life will always be this good and this easy. God bless America."

And yet, as I read the warnings of Micah, I cannot help but wonder how long it shall be before we receive what is in store for us if we continue down our path of individual and national sin.

May we strive to be among the remnant that is preserved in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.