

Review

The prophet Micah has been warning the capitol cities of Judah and Israel that God's judgment is coming quickly. Their intense wickedness, along with their presumption upon God's continued blessings because of who they are, have guaranteed that they will be cursed. They will be carried into captivity while their cities are destroyed.

However, Micah has also told them that God fully intends to restore them when they arrive at true repentance. God will preserve for Himself a remnant of faithful Jews, who will one day be brought back into the land, and God Himself will be their king.

We have come to chapter six, which begins the third and final section of the book.

6:1-2 The Indictment Of The Lord

As I read these words, I am reminded of our recent study of Job. In that book, Job says in honest ignorance,

Job 23:3-4 "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments."

Many people take this attitude. "I just want justice. I wish I could just get a fair deal." But that is not a wise wish. In fact, the Lord could wipe us out in any court case. All of us are guilty before God because of sin. And yet, in His mercy, He does not impart the judgment of justice upon us, unless we fill up the full measure of sin.

In this case, the Jews had exceeded mercy, and were about to receive justice. The Lord had a case against His people, and He declares to all creation that He has a charge, an indictment, against them. He challenges them to defend themselves, knowing that they cannot.

6:3-5 Remember What I Have Done

Continuing this idea of a court case, the Lord reviews what He has done for the people, and then asks for a defense. "How have I wearied you? How have I not defended and preserved you? What have I done to be forsaken by you? How have I not demonstrated My requirements of righteousness?"

6:6-7 Shall I Offer Sacrifices?

Micah now asks the question of those to whom he is prophesying. If he is guilty of sin, what should he do? Burnt offerings included the sacrifice of a one-year old calf (Lev. 9:3). Guilt offerings mandated the offering of a ram (Lev. 5:15-16). Grain offerings were made with oil (Lev. 2). The firstborn males of every beast were presented to the Lord as sacrifices, while the firstborn sons were redeemed (Exo. 13:15).

Should he offer all of these things in abundance in hopes of receiving forgiveness? The people of Israel were well familiar with the prophet Samuel's words to King Saul:

1Sam. 15:22 ..."Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."

As a matter of fact, by this time, the Lord had had enough of their empty sacrifices:

Is. 1:11-14 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. "When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them."

Their religious actions meant nothing to God if there was no heart for Him motivating them. Religion for the sake of religion, or as a substitute for real relationship with God is disgusting to God.

6:8 He Has Shown You What Is Good

The Lord wasn't asking for blood and oil. He was simply asking that the people practice justice, love kindness, and walk in humility.

This wasn't some new revelation. Moses told the people in Deuteronomy,

Deut. 10:12-13 "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?"

God Himself said,

Jer. 7:22-23 "...I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people...'"

"Instead of performing these religious rituals, how about treating people right? How about being merciful to people the way I've been merciful to you? How about simply having a right walk with Me?"

6:9-10 The Voice Of The Lord Will Call

God's voice is calling to the city, and it is wise to fear God's name. Listen to what that voice is saying!

What is that voice saying? Unfortunately, the last section of this verse is very difficult to understand, as evidenced by the multitude of translations:

Mic. 6:9(NAS) ...Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time?

Mic. 6:9(NIV) ...Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.

Mic. 6:9 (NRSV) ...Hear, O tribe and assembly of the city!

Mic. 6:9(NLT) ...The armies of destruction are coming; the LORD is sending them.

The word "appointed" or "assembly" is "yaw-AD," a verb meaning "to assemble together, to meet or gather." I believe, as near as I can determine, that God is asking who in that city, in that tribe, in that house, has gathered together with the spoils of his theft and deception.

We just saw recently in our study of Amos that the wicked despise the things of God,

Amos 8:5 saying, "When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales?"

Ripping people off by not giving them what they're paying for. This amazes me anytime I encounter it. And yet, when someone has rejected God's morality, then what's to prevent them from doing it? If the purpose of life is to get everything you can, then why not shortchange the customer? Why not scam or pull the con? And yet, it is important to understand that God will judge those who cheat others.

Deut. 25:13-16 "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God."

God will not justify this behavior. It is an abomination to Him, and so He will judge it. Those who think they're getting away with their cheating will fall sick. They will have money to buy expensive dinners, but they won't be satisfied with them. They will try to build a fortune, but it will be stolen or trickle away.

6:16 Omri And Ahab

Omri was the commander of the army of the northern kingdom of Israel when the king was killed by his own servant (1Kings 16). Omri was made king, and built the city of Samaria.

1Kings 16:25 Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who were before him.

He provoked the Lord with his idols, and raised his children with no fear of God. His son Ahab became king after him, and proved to be worse than Omri his father.

1Kings 16:30-33 Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

The sins of the northern kingdom's kings had become the sins of the northern kingdom's people. This is so typical of a nation. The leaders, the celebrities, and other influential personalities of the country act with immoral and sinful behavior that would be shocking in the average citizen's life. But then as the generations progress, this behavior becomes practiced and acceptable among the people. That's what had happened in the northern kingdom, and God is going to give them up for destruction because of it.

7:1-6 Wicked Men Abound

Micah laments over the fact that there are no godly people in his nation. Like a fruit picker looking for fruit on barren trees, like a thirsty man searching a desert for water, Micah could find no one righteous with which to have fellowship and common ground. The leaders were corrupt, the citizenry criminally greedy. He felt utterly alone.

He was living in a day and age when your neighbors, friends, and even family would sell you for profit, and stab you in the back, and betray you.

You may have noticed that these were the words which Jesus used to describe the situation that the apostles would face when they went into the world to preach the gospel:

Matt. 10:34-36 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER,

AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD."

7:7 I Will Wait For The Lord

Though Micah's friends and family might betray him, we was still going to trust in the Lord. He knew David's words in Psalm 4 to be true:

Psa. 4:2-3 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah. But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.

7:8-10 Though I Fall I Will Rise

The wicked seem to be winning in Micah's day.

The other day, I was driving along in the car and listening to the news.

- Forbidding gay marriage is ruled to be in violation of the Massachusetts state Constitution.

- Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore is fired for refusing to remove a monument bearing the Ten Commandments because the separation of church and state is supposedly a "Constitutional mandate."

- Americans need to understand that Islam is "a religion of peace," and that the holy month of Ramadan has "nothing to do with increased attacks" against our troops in Iraq.

- Michael Jackson was arrested today for yet another incident of child molestation. But while the press is clamoring to put his picture on the news, is anybody asking what we should do to parents who let their 11- and 12-year-old boys spend the night at his house?

I found myself thinking that the world has gone too far to ever get the public back to a Biblical view of righteousness. I thought, "It's really too late, there's really no hope. Christians will continue to be painted as foolish, ignorant, judgmental, and dangerous psychopaths. Groups like

Muslims and gays, on the other hand, will continue to receive more and more acceptance from the mainstream public."

But you know what? God is in control. Micah knew that. Don't rejoice over me, my enemy. Someday, you will be ashamed, and I will be brought out into the light. I simply need to see my own sin and repent for it, because those who don't are going to be trampled down like mud in the street.

7:11-17 On That Day

That day is coming soon, when not only will the enemies be trampled down in the judgments of the Great Tribulation, then the Lord will return and extend the borders of Israel to their promised positions.

The Lord will be our Leader, our Shepherd, our Ruler, and King. On that day, the unrighteous nations will be ashamed. The Lord will put them in their proper place.

7:18-20 He Will Again Have Compassion On Us

Micah asks the Lord a rhetorical question: "Who is a God like You?" There is none who has such righteousness mixed with compassion. Who judges sin, yet then restores the broken relationship. Yes, Israel will be judged, but then will be raised up again, because God is compassionate and faithful.