

Bible Survey - Micah

by Peter Hammond

Micah's message emphasizes the importance of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, and warns of the consequences of sin and the importance of repentance and faith.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Micah 4:2, Micah 6:8, Micah 7:9, Micah 7:15, Micah 7:18, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 10:34

Topics: "Prophetic Ministry", "Repentance And Justice"

Description

Peter Hammond preaches on the prophet Micah, who highlighted the importance of justice, mercy, and humility in our walk with God. Micah condemned idolatry, immorality, and injustice among the rulers, priests, prophets, and people of Israel. The prophet emphasized the need for repentance, warning of God's judgement on sin and His blessings on the repentant. Micah's prophecies were fulfilled, including the birth of the Prince of Peace in Bethlehem, echoing the teachings of Jesus on justice, mercy, and faith.

Transcript

"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 6:8.

Who is Micah?

The name of the prophet means, 'who is like the Lord?' In Micah 7; 8, the prophet uses a play on his own name by saying: "Who is a God like you?" Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah who had also ministered in Judah, and Hosea who ministered to the ten Northern tribes of Israel. While Isaiah was born of royal blood, in the palace, a cousin of the king, Micah was a simple man from a poor region in the country.

When Did Micah Minister?

Micah prophesied during the reigns of King Jotham (750-731 B.C.), Ahaz (731-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (716-686 B.C.).

The Doom of Israel

The rulers of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, are held directly responsible for its corruption. Samaria, the capital of Israel, had adopted calf worship, Baal worship and other Canaanite, Syrian and Assyrian idol worship. God sent Elijah, Elisha and Amos to warn the ten Northern tribes of Israel to repent, but they persisted in their wickedness. "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. For behold, the Lord is coming... The mountains will melt under Him... for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel... I will make Samaria a heap of ruins... All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, and all her pay as a harlot shall be burned with the fire..." Micah 1:2-7.

Structure of Micah

Micah arranged his 19 prophecies into three cycles. Each began with a warning of impending judgement and concluded with a promise of God's mercy. The three sections of Micah deal with: Crime and Punishment (chapters 1 to 3), Peace and Security (chapters 4 to 5) and Justice and Mercy (chapters 6 to 7). Micah deals with sin, judgement and Salvation. One third of Micah targets the sins of God's people. Another third looks at the punishments of God to come. Another third of Micah promises hope for the faithful who repent.

Condemnation and Consolation

Each section begins with condemnation and ends with consolation. Sin must be punished before it is pardoned. The three main categories of evil condemned by the prophet Micah are identified as: Idolatry, Immorality and Injustice.

Idolatry, Immorality and Injustice

Idolatry insults God by substituting something for God, worshipping anyone or anything other than God. Immorality is indulging ourselves at the expense of others and in violation of God's Law and our commitments. "...Behold, against this family I am devising disaster... For this is an evil time." Micah 2:3. Injustice injures others. "Hear now O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the House of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil..." the rulers of Israel are condemned for exploiting the people whom they were responsible to serve.

Princes, Priests and Prophets

The princes, priests, prophets, profiteers and people are condemned for the curse of corruption, covetousness, cheating, cruelty and escalating crime. "Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! ...They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them... A man and his inheritance." Micah 2:1-2.

"Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people stray; who chant 'Peace'

..." Micah 3:5.

Bribery and Profiteering

"Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, 'Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.' Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the Temple like the bare hills of the forest." Micah 3:9-12.

False Religion Condemned

The very people who should have upheld the Law of God were being financially rewarded to say the things that the people wanted to hear. They were tickling the people's ears with what they were itching to hear. Prophets prophesying for profit. Preachers pandering to people's preferences. Compromise, cowardice, covetousness. The Prophets, priests, princes, profiteers and people of Judah are condemned. "But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, nor do they understand His counsel..." Micah 4:12.

Idolatry Condemned

"And it shall be in that day', says the Lord, 'That I will cut off... the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; thus I will destroy your cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard'." Micah 5:10-15.

What Does God Require of Us?

"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 6:8.

Justice, Mercy and Humility

Justice demands adherence to the Letter of the Law. Mercy requires compassion. Humility requires an attitude of devotion to God, fearing God and humbly depending upon Him. Justice requires respect for life, liberty and property. Just weights and measures. The sanctity of life. Respect for property, respect for truth, respect for God. Do not slander or gossip, do not hold back wages overnight, do not move boundary stones. Care for widows and orphans, the poor, the sick, the handicapped, and the unfortunate. Honour, respect, consideration, fairness, loyalty, compassion, caring, forgiveness, grace, generosity and hospitality. Our actions, our motivation and our attitudes are dealt with here.

What does God require of us? Just ethics in all areas of life. Merciful consideration for others. A humble walk with God, teachable and dedicated to follow in His footsteps.

Hypocrisy Condemned

In His great rebuke of the Jewish scribes and pharisees in the Temple, in Matthew 23, the Lord Jesus condemns them because they "...do not do according to their words; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men... They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues... whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. 'But woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation... 'Woe to you, blind guides... Fools and blind! ...For you have neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faith..." Matthew 23:3-23.

Justice, Mercy and Faith

In this classic sermon, our Lord Jesus Christ echoes the prophet Micah and summarises the essence of Micah 6:8: The weightier matters of the Law are: Justice, Mercy and Faith. Here Faith is plainly equated with walking humbly with our God.

Legal Charge Against Israel

Micah presents God's legal suite against the people of Israel and Judah. "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. 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." Micah 6:1-2.

Empty Rituals and Worthless Sacrifices

"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. O My people, remember now... That you may know the righteousness of the Lord. With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" Micah 6:4-6. The Lord condemns the empty rituals and worthless sacrifices of thousands of lambs and ten thousand rivers of oil as worthless hypocrisy.

Wicked and Deceitful Ways

The Lord condemns the "wickedness... abomination... wicked scales... deceitful ways... violence... lies... deceitful... therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins... that I may make you a desolation... therefore you shall bear the reproach of my people." Micah 6:10-16. "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 6:8.

Failure to Remove the High Places

King Jothan (750-731 B.C.) was regarded as a good king, but he failed to remove the high places from the land. These high places were both idolatrous and also where the Canaanites sacrificed babies. The king should have upheld the law and ensured that his people did the same.

Encouraging Evil

King Ahaz was an evil king who not only failed to stop the evil practices that were spreading from the Northern ten tribes of Israel to the southern kingdom of Judah and from the cities to the country, but he even encouraged it.

Undermining the Foundations of Civilisation

The concentration of sinners in cities accentuates the spread of sin. The corruption in Jerusalem began to infect and infest the country towns. The prevalence of bribery amongst judges and corruption of both prophets and priests and the exploitation of the poor by money changing profiteers eroded respect for life and property and broke down trust. Family relationships, the basic building block of society, began to unravel and undermine the very fabric of the social order. "Shall I count pure those with the wicked scales, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth." Micah 6:11-12.

God's Law Applied to Every Area of Life

Micah mentions every village name in the Shephelah and twisted each name to communicate a message of judgement. It was a brilliant example of preaching, applying God's Law to every area of life. Micah makes clear that God holds leaders responsible for the crime and corruption which infests society.

Debasing Currencies

Dishonest weights and scales, usury, inflation and the debasing of currencies is condemned as a deceitful abomination that will inevitably bring God's judgement upon the wicked. As God is holy and righteous, He cannot tolerate persistent evil. Idolatry and sorcery, deceit and fraudulent dealings, seizing lands and confiscating the inheritance of widows and orphans violates God's standards of justice and demands decisive condemnation.

Greed and Treachery

"The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood... The prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe... so they scheme together... Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion... For son dishonours father, daughter rises against her mother...A man's enemies are the men of his own household." Micah 7:2-6.

Crime and Punishment

The Scripture asks the question: "Why do people commit crime so readily? Because crime is not punished quickly enough." Ecclesiastes 8:11. "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil... who acquit the guilty for a bribe but deny justice to the innocent." Isaiah 5:20-23.

The Role of Government

The Bible is very clear that God has instituted Civil government as "an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." Romans 13:4. Civil government is called to be a minister of God's justice: "To punish those who do wrong" (1 Peter 2:14). "Bloodshed pollutes the land and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it." Numbers 35:33.

Minister of Justice

"Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed, or My wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done - burn with no one to quench it." Jeremiah 21:12. "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor, or favouritism to the rich, but judge your neighbour fairly." Leviticus 19:15.

Unjust Weights and Measurements

Biblical economics forbids unjust weights and measures. "Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights... I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:35-36.

Honest Money

Throughout the Bible, money is spoken of by weight. God's Law requires that financial transactions be made in terms of honest measures. Inflation is the theft of wages and the destruction of savings by the devaluing of currency. Inflation is essentially dishonesty - a hidden tax - where "silver has become dross"

Isaiah 1:22.

"The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are His delight." Proverbs 11:1.

"Skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales... I will never forgive." Amos 8:5-7.

The Lord forbids the taxation of inheritance (1 Kings 21:3). Land does not belong to any government. Civil servants may not tax land, nor the inheritance left by a righteous man to his descendants.

"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before Me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not have to destroy it..." Ezekiel 22:30.

Israel Judged

The people of Israel (the Northern ten tribes), ignored the prophetic warning of Micah and Amos and so they were overrun by the Assyrians. The capital of Israel, Samaria, fell in 722 C.C. to the Assyrian King Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.).

Judah Repents and is Delivered

However under King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.) the Southern Kingdom of Judah, repented and turned back to the Lord (2 Chronicles 29 to 31). As a result the Lord delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib of Assyria (2 Chronicles 32). When Sennacherib of Assyria besieged Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32). The Lord sent His Angel to deliver Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32: 21). The Kingdom of Judah endured another 150 years after the fall of the capital of Israel, Samaria.

Fulfilled Prophecy

Micah 1:5-6 records a prophecy that Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, would be destroyed. It would be turned into a vineyard and its foundations would be uncovered. In fact, the walls of Samaria were cast down 722 B.C. and today vineyards grow where once the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel stood. Archaeologists have excavated to expose the very foundations of the city. "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done." Isaiah 46:9-10.

Refugees Undermine the Social Order

When Samaria fell (in 722 B.C.), thousands of refugees poured into Judah, bringing their religious syncretism, the worship of the Canaanite fertility god Baal, social corruption and rampant immorality with them. Micah's bold message of Judgment and call for Repentance made King Hezekiah to call his people to repentance and Reformation.

Justice and Mercy

Micah reveals both the justice and mercy of God. God's holiness requires that sin be punished. God's love mercifully provides atonement for the repentant. Changed hearts always lead to changed lives. Justice, mercy and a humble walk of Faith. God's judgement on the unrepentant is inevitable and God's blessings upon those who repent is proclaimed. God is consistent in judging sin and He is faithful to the remnant of

His people who repent. At the Cross we see God's perfect justice (the death penalty for sin) and also God's perfect mercy that the repentant go free, because the Just has died in the place of the unjust.

Christ in Micah

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2. It is this passage from Micah that is quoted in Matthew 2:5-6 when the wise men from the East were seeking the One who was to be born King: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel."

From Everlasting

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His Name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His Government and peace there will be no end, upon the Throne of David and over His Kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isaiah 9:6-7.

The Bread of Life and the Lamb of God

The King will come to Bethlehem, a most unlikely place. Bethlehem was small and insignificant, apart from its provision of bread for the Jerusalem market and lambs for the Temple sacrifices. Yet the prophecy of Micah 5:2 was fulfilled. Through the decree of Caesar Augustus for registration for a poll tax, Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem and a Child was born, a Son was given, the Bread of life and the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

"He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion the Law shall go forth, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many nations and rebuke strong nations afar off... We will walk in the Name of the Lord our God forever and ever." Micah 4:2-5.

"He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:18-19.

"He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness." Micah 7:9.

"As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders." Micah 7:15.

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

The Prince of Peace

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the Law shall go forth, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." Micah 4:1-3

The Arrogance of the UN

It is the last part of that prophecy that is dishonestly plagiarised by the United Nations, who have placed that Messianic prophecy in stone outside the UN Headquarters in New York: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." Incredibly, the UN misappropriates this Messianic prophecy to themselves, without attributing its source. The United Nations is not even capable of bringing peace to Somalia or Bosnia. How do they expect to bring peace to the whole world?! There is no peace without the Prince of Peace.

Rescuing the Remnant

"In that day,' says the Lord, 'I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted; I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation; so the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever.'" Micah 4:6-7.

A Man's Enemies Will be Those of His Own Household

When the Lord sent out His twelve Apostles, He quoted Micah 7:6: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." Matthew 10:34-39.

Thy Will Be Done

When we pray the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..." we are praying for the fulfilment of what the prophet Micah proclaimed: "That the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills and peoples shall flow to it. And many nations shall come and say 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord... He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in His paths... the Law shall go forth in the Word of the Lord. He shall judge between many nations... we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God, forever and ever."

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