

The God Who is Just
A Sermon on Micah: Part III
by
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1. Introduction

2. The Requirement God Has Given Every Man (6:1-16)

a. God stands on trial and calls His witnesses against Israel for her crimes (vv. 1-5).

i. God does not just play the part of the judge; He comes down from the bench and actually goes on trial.

1. Micah opens this section with a series of commands.

a. The prophet first calls the Israelites to hear the Word of the Lord.

b. What he calls them to then, are the commands of God. God calls them to get up and plead their case.

2. In v. 2 we see that the mountains and the foundations of the earth, which is another way of saying, all of the earth, God's character witness.

a. He has a case to bring against His people, and the case deals with them violating the terms of His covenant.

b. The gist of it is that obedience to the covenant brings blessing and disobedience to the covenant will bring cursing.

ii. In vv. 3-5: God then asks Israel if He has wronged her.

1. There's a tenderness that you might miss simply because of the backdrop of judgment, but God is earnestly pleading with them.
 - a. He is yearning for them. He asks as a Father pleading with His children.
 - b. "What have I done to you? Have I left you wearied and helpless? Answer me. I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam. My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered him, *and* from Shittim to Gilgal, so that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD."
2. God appeals to them here on the basis of His covenant faithfulness.
 - a. God reminds them that He has acted with justice and upheld the terms of His covenant.
 - b. Here then is the grand indictment against Israel in Micah's day: she has shown only ingratitude and contempt for God.

b. Israel foolishly responds to God's charges (vv. 6-8)

- i. The people recognize God's anger yet seek to placate Him through sacrifice (vv. 6-7).
 1. They recognize that God has a legitimate case against them—yet look how they approach Him.
 - a. Notice the first question they ask in v. 6 is a matter of quality.
 - b. The second question they ask in v. 7 is one of quantity.

2. The second half of v. 7 really depicts how out of hand everything is:
 - a. They ask, “Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”
 - b. They’re talking about offering up their child as a sacrifice before the Lord to atone for their sins.
 - i. Human sacrifice was obviously condemned by the Law, yet we see it happen during the time of Micah (2 Ki. 16:3).
 - ii. The land is so steeped in pagan idolatry that they are not even aware of what God desires. He finds human sacrifice detestable.
- ii. God has already told them what He requires: do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God (v. 8).
 1. Micah 6:8 is a popular passage and for good reason, yet one I believe is often unfounded.
 2. This verse is not primarily concerned with what you are doing, but rather, what you are. The prophet here is primarily speaking in terms of character traits.
 - a. The Israelites might come with sacrifices, but their hearts were far from God.
 - b. There was no question of what the people were to be doing, so He simply reaffirms that here; you know what is good, you know what is required of you.

- c. It's important to note that none of these three things are commands in the text; they are verbal nouns, or otherwise, describing this state of being.
 - i. The idea of "loving justice" is simply acting with equity and fairness with others.
 - ii. The idea of loving mercy is a little more difficult to convey because it is not talking about mercy at all. It is speaking of a covenant-keeping love.
 - iii. Finally, the idea of walking humbly speaks of obedience to God.
- d. These three aspects of covenant-faithfulness to God all tie into the idea that God has always been concerned with the qualities of the heart in addition to sacrifice.

c. *The consequences to Israel's flagrant disobedience are revealed (vv. 9-16)*

- i. Inevitably, God indicts the nation for their flagrant disregard of His justice, covenant faithfulness, and commandments (vv. 9-12).
 - 1. Vv. 9-16 simply show us that the Israelites are doing the exact opposite of what we just learned about in v. 8, and the consequences are now upon them.
 - a. If you have the NASB, the term that is translated as "tribe" in v. 9 should be translated as "rod".
 - b. He is telling them to heed, obey, or submit themselves to the rod, meaning the rod of punishment.

2. Now in vv. 10-12 and we're going to simply summarize these sins they are being punished for:
 - a. Vv. 10-11 shows the merchants who are storing up their ill-gotten goods.
 - b. V. 12 speaks of the rich men of Jerusalem who have become all the richer through their use of violence and deceit.
- ii. All of this demonstrates how they have failed to uphold their covenantal obligations with God in just business practices and that God will nonetheless uphold His covenant with them.
 1. In v. 13 He describes what He will be doing in response, while in vv. 14-15 He describes how He will do it.
 - a. In v. 13 we see that God will make them sick. He will smite them or strike them down—and the word He uses here is the same word used in Gen. 8 where God destroyed everything in the flood.
 - b. How He does this then is found in the next two verses, and essentially, He will do it through the use of what are called futility curses. They will take some course of action only for their efforts to be in vain.
 2. V. 16 then is a final summary statement of why this evil will come upon them:
 - a. They have gone the way of two incredibly wicked kings, who were more wicked than all the kings before them.
 - b. As a result, they will be destroyed, they will be mocked, and will become the scorn of the nations.

3. The Rebellion God Has Seen in Every Man (7:1-6)

a. Micah laments over the injustice of his people (vv. 1-4).

i. The prophet pronounces woe upon himself because he recognizes that the corruption in the land is total (vv. 1-2).

1. Micah is distressed at the state of his people; he has come in, like one looking to glean grapes after the harvest, yet there is nothing left over to refresh him.

2. In v. 2 he explains the analogy: there is not a single godly person in the land.

ii. Those in power conspire together and accomplish their wicked desires (v. 3-4).

1. They put both hands together to commit evil—and what he means by that is that they have skill in doing evil.

a. The people of power conspire and weave their crafty plans together.

b. They aren't coming together out of some sense of comradery.

2. In v. 4 the prophet laments over the fact that even the best of men are like a hedge of thorns waiting to trap, wound, and tear at the flesh of all who fall into them.

a. Notice how Micah abruptly talks about these people he calls “watchmen”.

b. These “watchmen” are likely the false prophets of Israel.

b. Every man, woman, and child, is characterized by their injustice and rebellion against the Lord (vv. 5-6)

- i.* Yet lest we think that the problem is contained to only those in a position of power and privilege, we find that not even a neighbor, friend, or lover can be trusted (v. 5)
 - 1.* Confidence placed in close acquaintances will only prove to bear disastrous consequences.
 - 2.* Even your spouse conspires against you.
- ii.* Even children have become enemies of their parents (v. 6)
 - 1.* The corruption is so widespread that even their own children conspire against them and pour out their own wrath upon their parents.
 - 2.* I immediately think of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 18.
 - 3.* This section also wonderfully describes why this church is so adamant to talk about the reality of what sin does with even the best of your relationships.

4. The Revelation of What God Has Planned for Every Man (7:7-20)

- a.* *Micah speaks as a representative of the remnant, having full confidence that God will be just and uphold His covenant promises (vv. 7-10).*
 - i.* When we move to the final section of the book, the tide turns to reveal that the hope of the prophet is not in this wayward people, but in the living God of the covenant (vv. 7-8).
 - 1.* There is an abrupt change when we come to v. 7.
 - a.* In v. 7 the prophet moves toward hope, speaking as a true representative of Israel.

1. V. 14 is Micah praying for the nation here, asking that God Shepherd His people to good pastures.
 - a. Both Bashan and Gilead are both incredibly fertile lands and great pastureland for their flocks.
 - b. The idea goes beyond Micah asking for prosperity here, as he asks that God be their Deliverer as in the days of old.

2. Vv. 15-17 then show the response of the Lord to Micah, and the fate of the nations who oppose God's people.
 - a. In v. 15 we see that God will indeed go before His people in full display of His power and might over all the earth.
 - b. Then in vv. 16-17 we see the result of God going before them; the nations are brought to open shame and silenced.

- c. *The prophet breaks out in praise to the Lord for His covenant faithfulness (vv. 18-20).*
 - i. In light of this great defeat of all their enemies, the prophet breaks out in praise to God:
 1. "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love (and that term "unchanging love" again is the term "hesed", speaking of God's love bound up in His covenant faithfulness). He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob

and unchanging love (again, that term “hesed” which speaks of God’s covenant love) to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers from the days of old.”

2. The answer to Micah’s question is that there is no god like Him.
 - a. There is no god who pardons sin and overlooks the rebellion of an entire, undeserving people; who does not stay angry at them forever.
 - b. In the end of all days, ultimate justice will reign supreme—not because there is anything lovely among the people of Israel, but simply by the fact that God is a just God, and He cannot and will not be unjust.
- ii.* This leads us to see that ultimately, Micah grounds this sense of justice in God’s love shown through His covenant faithfulness to Abraham.
 1. The reason why the prophet and the exiled people place hope in God is not due to the fact that they stand worthy of His covenant love.
 2. What the book of Micah does for us then is bind the idea of God’s love in terms of His covenant with Abraham, and therefore, any who are heirs to that promise.

Community Group Questions:

1. Discuss the implications of God’s “lovingkindness” or “covenant faithfulness” to His people. Why does this ultimately matter for the people of Israel? How does this tie in with your understanding of the Kingdom of God?
2. How do we reconcile God’s justice and holiness with God’s love and mercy?
3. How does the book of Micah equip you to share the gospel?