

Bearded Men – The Minor Prophets – Micah

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By Dr. Jeff Meyers

Bible Text: Micah 1:1-8; 2:1-3,9; 4:1-5

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I want to encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to two places in the Old Testament. The first is the Book of Micah, chapter 1, and then the Book of Leviticus, chapter 25. Those passages don't usually go together but we'll see how they connect in just a moment. But as you're turning primarily to the Book of Micah, if you're a first time guest or visitor, I want to welcome you as we have come to somewhat of the conclusion, we're wrapping up a message series going through the Minor Prophets, looking at these 12 books, the last 12 books of the Old Testament. In fact, one of the things you may notice is that as we're wrapping it up, why is it that we're only in the fifth book out of 12? Because from the very origination of this series, we were not going to go into the last six books of the Minor Prophets because they primarily deal with two simple subject matters: the return of Jesus and the rebuilding of the Temple in Israel and obviously there are those passages alluded to in the first six. So, we intentionally are just addressing the first six books of what we know as the Minor Prophets.

As you're turning to Micah, there are two passages in the Book of Micah that whether you realize it or not, you are probably pretty familiar with if you have a church background. The first one is the Book of Micah 5:2. Christmas season, have you ever sung *O Little Town of Bethlehem*? It is Micah 5:2. That's the Old Testament prophecy that told the world that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would be born in that small little town or village. And then you go one more chapter into Micah, 6:8, when it asks us this rhetorical question: What does the Lord require of us? And that is to love justice and mercy and to walk humbly with him.

Two very well-known Scriptures but today we find ourselves in chapter 1 and what we see is if we take a step back and look at all the Minor Prophets from sort of a distant view, we see a theme taking place. The Lord is continually upping the ante, he is continually challenging us, he's turning up the temperature. Whatever allusion or analogy you want to use as we make our way through the Minor Prophets, he's making more and more clear his intentions of how we are to live this thing called life and the consequences if we do not heed to that.

Today, we're going to see two major themes in the Book of Micah. We're going to see a warning from God and we're going to see a woe from God. I'll explain what those mean in just a moment. But I want to encourage you to open to or turn on your Bibles to the Book of Micah 1. It says,

“The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that

therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.”

As I mentioned, when we come to the Book of Micah, we see the temperature raised, we see the intensity become even greater because here what we see is over the course of the last four books of what we know as the Minor Prophets, the Lord has spoken to Israel in the north, he has spoken to Judah in the south, he’s even spoken to the Gentiles in Nineveh. He’s literally covered the entire world and said, “This is what I expect of you and the consequences if you do not obey me are going to be thus.”

We come to Micah 1 and the whole first chapter is this warning from God. He’s giving us a heads-up; he’s warning us that something is about to happen. As many of you know, if I were to pick a sport of preference in my life it’s the sport of baseball. And I will confess to you that when it comes to this word of baseball, “fielding,” it’s not really my expertise. I like to hit the ball, catching the ball is a struggle. But I really struggle in the outfield. I struggle. I don’t know what it is. I can catch the ball below my knees but above my head I struggle with it. But thankfully, if you’ve ever been on a baseball field, in the outfield they have this thing called a warning track. A warning track typically is a section of dirt or of some other substance that tells the outfielder, “If you don’t slow down and change, you’re going to hit a wall and it’s going to hurt.” That’s what a warning track is.

In a football game, we have the two minute warning. It’s telling us that the game is about to end. Have you noticed there are some teams out there, there are some quarterbacks out there, that don’t seem to really get with it until the last two minutes? Why? Because they just think that in those last few moments, when it really gets intense, this is when we respond.

This is God’s warning. He is warning humanity of something that we need to heed. You say, “What is he warning us about?” First thing is this: he is going to descend, he is going to come back again. Look at verse 3, “For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.” The Bible makes it very clear that some day in the future, the Lord Jesus Christ himself will descend to the

very dirt that according to Colossians 1 he formed and fashioned. Yet, you and I live in a world, according to 1 Peter 5, that says that there will be scoffers, there will be mockers, there will be people who come in the last days. As we get closer and closer to the return of Jesus, the volume is going to get louder and louder from a group of people saying, "Surely, he hasn't come back for 2,000+ years, he's not coming back." But it says, "Assuredly, he will."

You go to the next book of the Bible, the Book of 2 Peter 3, and there's this famous passage that's actually dealing with the Second Coming. It says as if "a day with the Lord is 1,000 years and 1,000 years is as a day." And so, people say, "Is he really going to come back?" According to the Bible, the Lord has literally just had a weekend, two days, 2,000 years. He is soon returning. You know, this was the last thing shared with the disciples of Jesus as they watched him ascend into the heavens. Back in the Book of Acts 1, they had been taught by Jesus for 40 days straight after his resurrection. They go to this place and there he ascends to the heights to make intercession for us always. What did the angelic beings say to those men? They said, "Behold, as he departed, he shall one day return." And the Bible makes it clear at the very end, in Revelation 19, there is coming a day where the heavens are going to open up and the Lord himself is going to descend back to earth.

The public and the media and the powers that be for some reason do not accept this but it is the truth. The Lord is coming back. Warning: he's coming back. Here's your second warning: he's not happy. In fact, it says not just that he will descend but according to the Book of Micah 1, he will destroy. It says here that he will take the molten iron and he will destroy. He will take the idols and he will crush them. He will take anything and everything that humanity has constructed to do whatever they want, anytime they want, with whomever they want, wherever they want and he will eliminate and he will crush and destroy.

You know, there's a picture of this in the Old Testament. It's in the Book of Genesis 11. God had given Noah and his descendants a commission: he had told them, "You need to go over here and you need to go over here." And in chapter 11, humanity gathers up together and says, "You know what? I don't think God really knows what he's doing. After all, we're smart and we know how to do this best." According to the Bible, in Genesis 11, they started building a tower. A tower to go above even the throne of God, to show God they didn't need him anymore. Do you remember what happened? God descended and he destroyed them. He did not kill their life at that moment but he changed the language so that there was confusion, that place was called a babel, which is confusion. Time after time again, you see that when the Lord descends, his wrath on injustice, his wrath on sin perpetrates wherever it is. Here, when he comes back that final time, it is world-wide, it is global. According to the Book of Luke 21, it will be light on one side of the earth, dark on the other and it is instantaneous as 1 Corinthians 15:10 says, "In the twinkling of an eye."

He is going to descend. He is going to destroy and he's also going to declare. Notice what it says in verse 8, that he weeps and he howls. You know, as you begin to do a study in

the Bible of just the voice of God and God speaking different things, you'll discover very quickly that his voice is incredibly powerful. You get the idea in the Book of Genesis alongside John 1 and Colossians 1, that he simply just spoke into Creation. In fact, one of my favorite verses in Genesis 1 is in verse 14 where it says that he spoke and there was the sun and the moon and the greater light and the lesser light and the stars also. I mean, with a simple word, he just flung all of the stars into space. He speaks and it occurs.

According to the Book of Hebrews 1:3 that existence, the universe as we know it, is upheld by his words. Now, let me give you a little scientific data in conjunction with that. If you do not know this, you currently are spinning on planet earth at about 1,000 miles per hour, I mean, we are moving. Earth makes Nascar look slow, guys. We are trucking right now. You say, "Well, why is it that we're going 1,000 miles an hour and we're not sliding off?" Because God keeps us where we are. You realize that there's this wonderful thing known as gravity? 9.8 meters per second squared keeps you on the ground and keeps short, thick guys like me from jumping very high. That's what gravity does.

You say, "Why are we not just flying off the planet into space?" Because the Word of God says so. He spoke into the rotation; he spoke into gravity; he spoke into your creation. When he speaks, it happens. And when he comes back in Revelation 19, what he says occurs, what he speaks takes place and what you see is all of those who have built idols, all those who have fought against him, all of those who said, "We don't need you, God," with the very words of his mouth, they are destroyed. We call it the famous Battle of Armageddon and at that point he sets up his millennial kingdom.

There's a warning here in Micah. God is coming back and he means business. So, between now and then, in chapter 2, he gives us a woe. How are we to respond? Because Jesus is coming back, he can come back today, he can come back tomorrow, he can come back in 500 years. None of us actually know the exact date but one thing we do know is this: every day we wake up, we're closer then than we were the day before. So, how do we respond to it? Here in chapter 2, we see a very direct communication to the people of Israel, the Jewish individuals. And he gives them these woes. Now, a woe is not good in the Bible. Woe means you're in trouble. Matthew 23, Jesus tells the Pharisees and the Sadducees and all the religious leaders, "Woe unto you guys for you make the outside shiny but the inside is corrupt. Woe unto you because you're taking these converts, they are twice the children of hell as you are." Any time the Lord says "woe," you're in trouble. Isaiah 5, "Woe unto those who call high low and low high, dark light and light dark. Woe unto those who call righteousness evil and evil righteousness." Any time the Lord says "woe," we need to pay attention.

Even though chapter 2 is specifically for the Israelites in Micah's day, we can learn from this. We need to take a picture of this, a parallel from this, to our lives so that we don't fall into the same trap. As you turn to chapter 2, I want to read verses 1-3 and verse 9,

"Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and

take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil... The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.”

In this passage of Micah 2, there are three woes, there are three really just more specific warnings. And really what God is saying is: a warning that there is nothing we can do about it. Jesus is coming back, you can't stop it, nobody can stop it but when he gives a woe, we have the capacity to change, we have the capacity to make a decision, we have the capacity not to experience the consequences that are mentioned if we will change our direction, our behavior, our attitude and our belief.

What's the first woe? The first woe ironically deals with our finances. Notice what it says in verse 2, woe unto them that “covet the fields and the houses.” In other words, those who are so desiring of anything and something, they'll do whatever it takes to get what they want whether it's the house they want, the power they want, the clothes they want, the stuff they want. It says that they had become a people that were so consumed with material they were missing the spiritual. They were so consumed with the here-and-now that they could not concentrate on the hereafter. Oh, what a scathing commentary of our contemporary culture.

Today, to make this a little more realistic, so to speak, I want to give you an illustration, I want to give you an analogy regarding a word, terminology, that we're all familiar with but we may not know the etymology or the history thereof. In one of the most well-known reality shows “The Apprentice,” there's a man by the name of Donald Trump who at the end of every one of his shows looks at somebody with these famous words and says, “You're fired.” It's the words that nobody wants to ever hear but, unfortunately, are just a part of life at times. And that terminology comes from a place that most people would least suspect.

When Traci and I were serving some years ago in the state of Texas in an area known as the Metroplex, the Dallas/Fort Worth area, we had just a massive migration of major companies in America come in and there were telecommunication companies and marketing companies, manufacturing companies, all these agencies were coming to the area bringing just thousands and thousands of people, all kinds of wonderful stuff with this exception: these major entities would bring in these high-priced and high-powered executives. They would transition the company from wherever to there for about 18 months and then they'd let them loose. They'd fire them and there'd be these men that were 50-55 years of age making who knows how much money, high-priced executives who could not get a job at McDonald's. Why? Because McDonald's knew as soon as you get the job you want, you're out of here. I'm not giving you what you want.

So, what we did as a church body, through the leadership of some of our men, was to create a ministry that was entitled “Surviving Career Transition.” What it was, was to

take these men, and we had lots of them who found themselves in this position, and to retool them, rework them. How do you take all that energy that you're putting toward company A for 20 years of your life and put it in a different direction? How do you market yourself now that you're 20 years past ever having submitted a resume to anybody?

I was not a facilitator, I was not a communicator, but I was the person on staff who had to make sure that the room was right and the refreshments were right so I had the "privilege" of being at all the sessions. One of the most interesting moments was on a Saturday morning when one of these individuals, one of these facilitators they brought in, shared this etymological truth. The term "fired" actually comes from the days of sharecropping. If you've never heard what a sharecropper is, a sharecropper is an individual who works as a farmer but does not farm his own land, does not go down the street to somebody else's land but actually lives on the land. I will be honest with you, that sharecroppers are not known to be wealthy individuals. My great, great grandfather was a sharecropper in Oklahoma and I brought a picture for you to see how this profession works. This is a receipt from his share of the crops. I think end of the year when everything was sold, they would divvy out among those on the land and because you had worked, you got some money. You'll see in 1936, he received a grand total of \$26.48. That was his salary for the year.

I know what some of you are thinking, that's less than going out to eat with your family today. Absolutely, there's this thing called inflation. But let me back it up a step: sharecroppers received more than just an annual sum of money. One of the "benefits," is this: that you had the opportunity to live on the land. The owner of the property built a house that you got to live in. The owner of the property planted crops that you got to live off. The owner of the property dug wells that you got to drink out of but everybody knows that every business known to man has good times and it has bad times. In the good times, just like in 1936, those who lived on the land and worked on the land would receive even a portion or a share of the profits of the land.

But what about the times where business wasn't good? What about the times when things weren't going well? When the crops weren't making money, then the people who were living on the land were even costing them money. So, here's what the landowners would do: they would set fire to their house because it's the only way to get rid of them. That's the terminology. That's what it means to be fired, it's to take a life that was completely dependent on somebody else and have the rug pulled out from underneath.

Folks, one of the lessons that we need to learn is this: that our financial wherewithal needs to be dependent on the Lord and nobody else because I'm going to tell you, no matter who you're trusting in, no matter what they've promised, no matter what they've "guaranteed" if it gets bad enough, they will set fire to your house.

One of the problems with history is that we fail to learn from it. And yet this is what happened to Israel. If you do a study of the Israelites in the days of Micah, do you know what they were doing? They were going and making contracts with Syria and they were

making contracts with Jordan and they were making contracts with all these other countries and instead of trusting God with what God had given them, they said, “No, no, I want to trust somebody else.” Woe unto us who would rather trust in the system of this world with our finances than to trust the Lord.

You know, oftentimes we get caught up and rightfully so in church talking about the 10% that’s the Lord’s. How about the other 90%? That all of it should be utilized as he has said, all of it should be dedicated to him and yet we so easily fall into this trap of saying, “I’m going to make an arrangement here. An agreement here. An alliance here.” And he says, “If you’ll just trust me first I’ll take care of this.” Woe unto us who are trusting the world with our financial wherewithal. Guess what’s going to happen one day? We’re going to get fired.

Then there’s the second woe. The woe of our families. Now, when I say the word “family” please understand, I know there’s a lot of structures because we have this unfortunate thing of the break-up of the family and the divorces so if you’re a single person, you’re a family. If you’re a mom with a child, you’re a family. If you’re a dad with a child, you’re a family. If you’re an aunt with a niece, you’re a family. That being said, and by the way, biblically speaking about family we have to draw the line at a man and a woman and we can’t go further than that. I want to make that real clear. I don’t care what the Supreme Court says, it’s got to stop there. That being said, what has happened is we’ve become a people who’ve said, “You know what? Maybe the smart people in the colleges, maybe the people who are up in the Beltway of Washington, maybe they know better how to do this thing called family than God does.” And that’s what he says in this passage, he says those specific families that are devising all this stuff.

You know, just this last week, one of the individuals that I admire when it comes to family instruction went through an interesting media escapade. His name is John Rosemond. If you’re not familiar with John Rosemond, he by a loose definition is a child psychologist. He is an individual who writes a syndicated column. Over 200 newspapers coast-to-coast carry his column. He gives parenting advice. He gives parenting wisdom and Traci and I are alive today because of a lot of the things that he told us to do, just to let you know. That being said, this week the state of Kentucky, now, I’m not picking on the state of Kentucky all you Wildcat fans, but it was the state of Kentucky which made a decision that they would no longer allow John Rosemond to be published in their papers because he does not have an earned Ph.D. in child psychology.

Now, can I be honest with you? I’m all for education but some of the dumbest people I know have doctorates and some of the smartest people I know never got out of high school. If we started saying that you had to have an advanced degree to be considered an expert, then we’ve all got to get rid of Windows because Bill Gates dropped out. Think about that one for just a moment. If we need to be an expert with a terminal degree and some of these events, guess what? Do you realize we haven’t had a President who ever qualified for the office? That being said, we cannot and should not say, “Well, the expertise lies in the ivory tower of education.”

It is this man, John Rosemond, who made this famous statement that I love: he said, “The problem with the family today is instead of going to the grandmother who raised eight kids of her own and 14 down the street, we go down to the bookstore and read about some expert who’s 31 years old and has never even been married much less had a kid.” We’ve come to this place where we say, “Oh, you’re certified. Oh, you’ve got degrees on the wall. Tell me how to do this.” And the Lord is saying, “What are you thinking? Woe unto you who go to those circles. Woe unto you who go to those environments. Just do it the way I told you to do it.”

You know, one of the things that caused Mr. Rosemond so much controversy is he wrote a book a couple of years ago called “Parenting by the Book: What Does the Bible Say About Raising Children.” Do you know what, the world doesn’t like it and I know states like Kentucky and they have standards but if you look at the root of the problem, we don’t have a culture that gravitates towards what God said but wants to gravitate toward what anybody else would give as their opinion.

So, woe unto us regarding our finances, woe unto us regarding our families but here’s the big one: woe unto us regarding our future. Notice what it says in verse 9 of chapter 2. It talks about the women and their children, those that they are raising. And what it’s essentially saying is what we do today as parents, what we do today as a society in moderation, the next generation will do to excess. And here in the Book of Micah, this woe is warning us that if we don’t change now, if we don’t heed the woes now, if we don’t heed the warning now, then what’s coming down the road is going to make what we’re dealing with right now pale in comparison.

You know, one of the most iconic images, one of the most, I guess, standard of items of American history is known as the Liberty Bell. I mean, if you were to just say, “What are the things that symbolize America?” I think you’d have to go with the flag; I think you’d have to go with the Statue of Liberty; and somewhere in the top three, at least the top five, you’ve got to go with the Liberty Bell. It is iconic in everything that it is and is primarily known not for its tone but for the crack that is in it. And there’s a lot of dispute about exactly how that crack got there. What we do know is this: that in February of 1846 the final, what people call the zigzag crack, the one that just did it in, occurred when it was rung on the anniversary of George Washington’s birthday.

What’s interesting about the Liberty Bell is this: what is written on it? See, when the people who devised this country known as the United States of America, when the people came together and said, “You know what? Let’s create a more perfect union.” When a group of people said, “You know what? Let’s do the world differently here than it’s been anywhere else.” They did not put an inscription of a philosopher on the bell. They didn’t put an inscription of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin or even George Washington himself. Now, you want to think about this: of anything they could put on the bell, guess what they did? They put a Bible verse. Now, how about those people who say that the people who started this place didn’t believe in God? They didn’t put anybody else on there.

They put a verse from Leviticus 25:10. I want you to turn to Leviticus 25:10 and I want you to see this pretty obscure passage in the Bible. As you're turning to Leviticus 25, please know this: there are over 31,000 verses in the Bible. They could've put, "The heavens declare the glory of God"; they could've put, "For God so loved the world"; they could've put even the last verse of the Bible, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." They could've put so many different concepts and ideas but I want you to see what they put. Leviticus 25:10,

"Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family."

Let me give you a little context there because this sets up the conclusion of the message of Micah. In God's economy for the Israelites, he had them on a Sabbath system. Every seventh day they were to take a break, not necessarily from the exhaustion of the previous six days but in preparation for the next six days, most famously known in the wilderness experience, "On that sixth day the Lord provided twice the manna they needed." Why? Because they were not to go collecting on the seventh day. But even beyond that, there was a Sabbath year. Every seven years, they were to let the land rest. If you'll do a study in the Old Testament of this Sabbath year, in the sixth year, the year before that, the Lord would actually provide for them three separate harvests. There was a harvest for year six, there was a harvest for the seventh year that they would not have any crops and there was actually a harvest to take and give to the poor to make it through year six and seven. God just miraculously provided.

So, they're on this cycle, every seven days, every seven years. Ah, but then there's the seventh, seven year cycle. The year of Jubilee, the 50th year. In that time frame, not only was the ground to lay fallow, not only were the things that they had been doing every seven years and every seven days coming to fruition, but on the 50th year it was a year of Jubilee. It was a year of celebration where they would celebrate not only God's goodness but God's grace and his mercy and as you read in Leviticus 25, they would return the land to the rightful owners. They would return money to the rightful individuals.

Let me share with you what that meant. Let's just pretend for the sake of illustration that I and my family found ourselves in a very detrimental financial situation and because of that, and this happens sometimes in the Jewish culture, I had to literally sell myself and my family to an individual to whom I would be their employee for life. My money would go to them, my labor would go to them. Why? Because I owed them a debt I could not pay. That's horrible for me, it's awful for my kids and for my grandkids. But on the 50th year, that debt was forgiven. On the 50th year my family was no longer bound to them.

Same thing would go for just a strictly financial debt, a land debt, any type of issue. What would happen is if you made bad decisions, poor decisions or unwise decisions, on the 50th year it's almost as if we got to push reset. Do you realize that when this wonderful, incredible country was established, the people who came together put an inscription on

the Liberty Bell that said, “We will not allow us to be like all other peoples.” If you want to do the math, about 50 years later guess what happened? Crack. Because we didn’t do what we said we’d do. And even in their best intentions, you know what our culture did? It became just like all other cultures; it became like all other civilizations.

You say, “Jeff, how does that apply to me? When I walk out today, how does that apply to my life?” There are many of you in this room who’ve come to this place and point in your life where you realize that according to the Bible you’re a sinner, that you have strayed from the things of God in a multitude of ways and in light of that, you realize that Jesus Christ was born, Jesus Christ lived, Jesus Christ went to the cross, he died and he rose from the grave three days later and because of that, you say, “Jesus, save me. Forgive me.” You were set free. You were given grace. You were given mercy. And then something happened. You started listening to the voice of the world. You started listening to the voice of other entities and you started straying, you started going away and saying, “Maybe they know best. Maybe they know better how to do it.”

What’s happened is, a lot of our lives have ended up like the Liberty Bell. They started off with faith. They started off with a belief. They started off with these great intentions but now they’re cracked because we did not do it the way we told God we’d do it.

Folks, here’s the great news: we serve a God of second chances, we serve a God of third chances, fourth chances, infinite chances and if you’re here this very day listening in person or on the internet, listen, here’s what the Lord is saying to you: you can have this address if you will just go back to where you began.