

Micah: Hope Under God's Judgment

Micah 1-7

Scripture Reading: Micah 5-6 Today's Scripture reading includes what may be the most familiar verses of Micah to Christians. Micah 5 speaks of Christ's birth in Bethlehem as well as His suffering for our sakes; Micah 6:8 famously speaks of God's expectations of His people. Let us read both chapters for a fuller understanding of these two verses in context.

Introduction: Few of us enjoy condemnation. We don't like it when others judge us; perhaps we like even less the reality that the thrice-holy God of Heaven will judge each of us for every idle word and every deed. Those of us who are in Christ Jesus have had our sins forgiven. Our sins were paid for by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross; we will never be condemned for them. Nevertheless, even as children of God, we stray. We call God our Father, but walk away from His goodness and grace. We become prodigal children whom the Good Shepherd seeks out, leaving His 99 "good sheep" behind in the fold. The chastisement of God in the present and the future judgment of God before His throne in the final day should prompt those of us who have been tempted to stray- or who have strayed- to cling to our Savior's side and abide in Him.

1. The Final Terrifying Arrival of God Should Keep Us Close (Micah 1)

Micah 1 begins in a dramatic key with the Almighty God summoning all the earth to come hear His judgment on Judah and Samaria as He descends. God descends, melting the mountains, splitting the valleys, and pouring the liquified rocks of the cities into the valleys like leftover trash (Micah 1:2-7). An awed hush must come over creation as the only True God once and for all pulverizes the idols of His people (1:7).

There will come a time when God's great patience is exhausted. The wine-cup of God's wrath will be poured out on humanity. But He deals with His chosen people, the physical descendants of Abraham prior to His dealing with those who never claimed Him as God (1:9). Incurable wounds can only be cured by amputation; death comes to the transgressor. The loss is immense. **Micah 6:1-5** amplifies the case of God as both Prosecutor and Judge of His people, Israel. God rescued His people from Egypt; He blessed despite Balaam's best efforts to curse her at Moab's behest. 'Despite this, Israel was bored "wearied" by the Lord.

O unbeliever, today is the day of salvation! Listen to the call of Almighty God and His prophet Micah: repent and receive mercy today while you may (1:16)! Behold, today is the day of salvation for the worst Ninevite, the worst hypocrite, the greatest sinner this side of eternity! Seek Jehovah while you may! Seek Him! You will find Him in the merciful Christ who died that you might receive God's mercy rather than His just damnation!

2. Imminent Chastisement of God should keep us Close (Micah 2-3):

You may be asking what is it that so provoked God? What made God mad enough to melt the mountains and turn stones into slag? Simply put, sin angers God. Let's sin how the planning and performance of sin in different particulars among different people angered God.

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2.1 Sin: Planned & Performed (Micah 2):

Some of us have great dreams- plans for the future, hope of success to come. Other people are schemers; even in bed as they take their rest they make nefarious plans to harm their neighbor and get gain from sin (Micah 2:1-2). The thefts of the day are planned by night in bed. If the culture is full of thieves and liars, there is no hope of justice or a good deal in the marketplace (2:5).

Those who love to sin hate to hear God's Word on the matter (2:6). When a Christian or a preacher confronts a sinner, their first response is often "don't judge me!" The people of Micah's day were no different. They urged Micah and other prophets to simply be silent. They did not realize God's warnings by God's Word and by God's servants are God's tools to bring people to repentance.

When people repent of sin, God gives mercy. The next time you find yourself irritated by someone warning you about sin, stop. Consider. What is the end of my way? Will this bring God's blessing? Or will God condemn this and chasten me? Proverbs commends those who are able to receive reproof and correct their way; it calls those who refuse to listen to correction "fools."

2.2 Sin: Particulars & People (Micah 2-3)

1. Do not presume on God's patience and mercy (2:7). God is indeed merciful. He truly loves you. But He is also holy. Do not tempt God by testing His patience! For the upright, God's Word is a blessing and a commendation. For the wicked, God's Word is the measuring line of God's judgment- the standard by which He judges.
2. Do not become the enemy of God by harming people made in the image of God (2:8-9). Instead of loving their neighbors, **the rulers of Judah took advantage** of the less powerful, in essence feeding off the very bones of the poor and needy (3:1-4). Civil leaders should administer justice, not injustice (3:9)!
3. **Prophets** deceitfully spoke of peace that God did not promise (3:5-6). These men wanted wages, they were the "hirelings" Jesus spoke of in John 10. As long as they were fed, they blessed; but if they lost a meal, they cursed. Their god was their belly (Phil 3). These men would go into the darkness they deserved. **Both priests and prophets were like Balaam- in the ministry for money, not for God** (3:11). These should have been servants of God who spoke for God, but the love of money had corrupted them. Now their services were simply for hire, not to serve God.
4. **Those who sought God's leading would be flummoxed by God's silence (3:7).** They were known for receiving God's wisdom and direction; now their foolishness would be on display. Those who reject God's Word have no right to

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demand God's further direction. Do what God tells you, then He'll tell you what to do next!

3. The Hope of God's Future Reign (Micah 4-5)

3.1 The Millennial Reign Described (Micah 4:1-8): After God judges the wicked, the Lord Jesus Christ will sit upon His throne to reign. During this Millennial kingdom, the nations of the world will come to pay homage to the King of kings and Lord of lords (4:1-2). Kings will humbly come to learn at the feet of King Jesus, even as the Queen of Sheba came to inquire of King Solomon in Israel's first golden age. In a day when the threat of nuclear exchange lies over the middle east, it is good to know that one day, swords will be beaten into plowshares (4:3)! The Prince of Peace will keep the peace with a rod of Iron (Isaiah 9:6-7). *This One will be our peace* (5:5)! There will be security in one's own fields that has not characterized this world since Cain killed Abel in the field (Genesis 4; Micah 4:4). Finally, God alone will be worshiped alone (4:5).

Those this world despises- the handicapped, the outcast, those God has judged- will be strengthened and have God's hand of blessing upon them (4:6-7).

– The first advent is also described in Micah as we see Jesus' birth (5:2) and suffering (5:1). Jesus is the Shepherd of His people (5:4). Those terrible Assyrians hated by Jonah would do their damage, but God would grant victory even over this feared empire (5:6-7).

3.2 The Reason for the Millennial Hope Here (Micah 4:9-13): Why does Micah give this hope here? When you are under God's chastising hand, you need to know the punishment that hurts so much today is for your betterment. God's correcting hand that hits us so hard is God's loving hand that pushes us *from* our sins *into* His blessing when we repent and return to Him. Notice the pain of childbirth is compared to how Judah would go painfully into exile and despair before she returned home (4:10). The afflicted nation would be transformed by suffering and God's work into the afflictor of other evil nations (4:13).

The Abrahamic Covenant will stand. Those who curse Abraham's seed (even as instruments of judgment) will be cursed. In those last days, *the remnant of Jacob will be among many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers of vegetation which do not wait for man or delay the sons of men* (5:9). Abraham who is the blessing of all people through Christ continues to bless through his physical descendants (Genesis 12:3). The Mosaic Covenant would stand: when God's people repent under God's judgement, God restores. The New Covenant stands: God forgives all His people's sins through the blood of Christ! Finally, God will root out the perennial sins of His people (Micah 5:10-15).

4. Available Present Mercy must bring us home (Micah 7)

God owns the cattle on a thousand hills; all the earth and its fullness belongs to Him. He may not require all your possessions, but He does want you to do right by your neighbor

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(6:6-8). When it seems the godly have all perished from the land (7:2), be the godly one who shines as the day in the darkness of violence, injustice and depravity! Expect God to be merciful to you as you wait for Him and seek His face (7:7-8)!

If you have strayed and are suffering under His loving chastisement, know that weeping is but for a moment. Come home to your loving Father, seek His grace and His mercy! He will forgive! He will restore (7:9)!

There is no other God than Jehovah! There is none like He! Behold your God in His Word: **Micah 7:18-20!**

*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.*

*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 to Abraham,
Which You swore to our forefathers
From the days of old.*

Let us pray:

Our Lord we pray with Micah (7:14-15):

*Shepherd Your people with Your scepter,
The flock of Your possession
Which dwells by itself in the woodland,
In the midst of a fruitful field.*

Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead

As in the days of old. O Lord our God let us behold

"As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt,

I will show you miracles." Do great things for us, O Lord our God! Cause Thy favor to fall upon us as Thy face shines upon us! Forgive our sins. Abide with us that we might abide with Thee, for You are our Shepherd forever and always! Amen.