

Connecting Through the Word
Three Things That Can Change Everything
Micah

Micah 6:1-8

1 Hear now what the LORD says: "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, And let the hills hear your voice.
2 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.
3 "O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me.
4 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.
5 O My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled, And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, From Acacia Grove to Gilgal, That you may know the righteousness of the LORD."
6 With what shall I come before the LORD, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old?
7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8 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?

Colossians 1:9-12

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Micah was from Moresheth-gath, which was about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Micah's name means "Who is like Jehovah?"

Micah is the sixth book in the Minor Prophets. Micah prophesied to both Samaria and Jerusalem during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1).

Jotham and Hezekiah were good kings who helped the nation, but Ahaz was a wicked man who sold the nation into idolatry.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos.

The prosperity and resulting materialism in Jotham's day eventually gave way to oppression and desperate levels of corruption during Ahaz's reign. (2 Kings 15-20; 2 Chronicles 27-32; Isaiah 36-39)

Micah's book "emphasizes the integral relationship between true spirituality and social ethics. Judah and Israel had missed this relationship and Micah was determined to turn them around. In short we are to live out our faith in all aspects of life.

The theme:

Micah shows that a true relationship with God is linked to how we treat one another.

Micah contrast Judah's sinful kingdom with God's righteous and just Messianic Kingdom.

Micah's Message:

Micah pronounced judgment on the cities of Israel and Jerusalem in Judah. These centers influenced the people of the nation. These were the urban problems that sound very much like our present-day problems.

Micah condemned violence, corruption, robbery, covetousness, gross materialism, and spiritual bankruptcy. He could be well be labeled, "The Prophet of the City."

Some Well Known Verses in the Book of Micah

The Most Well Known Verse:

Micah 6:8

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?

The Birthplace of Messiah

Micah 5:2

"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."

Peace in the Messiah's Kingdom

Micah 4:3

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.

A Brief Look at the First Five Chapters

Proclaiming

Future Judgment for Past Sins (1-3)

Micah's 1st Message Directed Against Samaria, Reaches to Jerusalem, (1)

Micah's 2nd Message Describes Specific Sins, (2)

Micah's 3rd Message Denounces Leaders for Sins, (3)

Prophesying

Future Glory - Because of Past Promises (4-5)

Prophecies of Last Days, (4)

Prophecy of First Coming of Christ, Before Second Coming and Kingdom, (5)

Pleading (6)

Present Repentance

Because of Past Redemption

Pardoning (7)

All Iniquity

Because of Who God Is and What He Does

Micah 6-7

The prophet Micah had delivered two of his three messages:

A message of warning (1-2)

A message of promise (3-5).

Micah's third message was a challenge for the Jews to trust the Lord and obey His will, for only then could the nation escape terrible punishment and fulfill God's purposes in this world.

As you read Old Testament history and prophecy, keep in mind how important it was for Israel to be obedient to the Lord. God had raised up the nation to bring blessing to the whole world (Gen. 12:1-3), for it was through Israel that the Savior would come. "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). When the Jews began to adopt the practices of the godless nations around them, it defiled them and made them less able to do the work God had called them to do.

It was because they despised their high and holy calling that the nation had to be chastened so severely.

Micah's first message was presented as a courtroom drama, and so was this third message.

The Judge declared the indictment (Micah 6:1-8)

Pronounced the sentence (6:9-7:7)

Then graciously promised mercy (7:7-20)

Micah used these three factors

Guilt, punishment, and mercy—as arguments to plead with his people to repent and return to the Lord. "Trust the Lord, not in spite of these things but *because of these things!*" is his closing message; and it's a message we need to hear today.

1. Because of great guilt, trust the Lord (Micah 6:1-8)

The sins of the people were hidden behind a veneer of religious activity—routine worship that didn't come from their hearts. Micah's contemporary, the Prophet Isaiah, told the people that the nation was sick from head to foot (Isa. 1:5-6) but wouldn't admit it, and that their "worship" was nothing more than "trampling" the temple courts (v. 12). They were like the patient who asked the doctor to retouch his X-rays so he wouldn't have to endure surgery! His deceit didn't cure him; it made him worse.

In this courtroom scene, the Lord called the witnesses (Micah 6:1-2) and told the people to be prepared to plead their case.

The Lord opened the proceedings by telling His side of the controversy, emphasizing the gracious way He had dealt with the nation from the very beginning. He redeemed them from Egyptian slavery; He gave them leaders who guided them through the wilderness with His help; and He brought them to their promised inheritance. And throughout this journey, the Lord had put up with their unbelief, disobedience, and repeated complaints (Ps. 106).

On three occasions, Balak, king of Moab, commanded Balaam to curse Israel, but God turned the curse into blessing (Num. 22-24; Deut. 23:5; Neh. 13:2). The Israelites didn't even know that this spiritual battle was going on; yet God protected His people. What did the Jews do in return? They became friendly with the Moabites, attended their idolatrous religious rites, and committed fornication with their women! (see Num. 25). What Balaam couldn't do by means of his curses, the Jews themselves did with their sinful lusts.

The phrase "from Shittim unto Gilgal" (Micah 6:5) reminded the people of Israel's crossing of the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land (Josh. 3-4). The same God who opened and closed the Red Sea also opened and closed the Jordan River so His people might claim their inheritance. He did for them what they couldn't do for themselves, but they didn't remember.

It's good for God's people to know the past and remember with gratitude all that God had done for them. The word "remember" is found at least fourteen times in the Book of Deuteronomy, and frequently the Jews were instructed to teach their children the mighty deeds of the Lord (Ex. 10:2; 13:8, 14; Deut. 6:20ff; Josh. 22:24; Ps. 78:1-8).

While we don't live in the past, we must learn from the past or we'll commit the same mistakes. Philosopher George Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Because Israel forgot God's mercies (Ps. 106:7), they also ignored God's commandments. The result was a hard heart that deliberately rebelled against God's will. God had every right to ask them, "What have I done to you that you should treat Me this way?"

Now the people replied to God (Micah 6:6-7). Instead of confessing their sins or standing mute because their mouths had been shut by their sense of guilt (Rom. 3:19), they asked what they could do to get rid of their sins. Their request shows how shallow their spiritual life really was and that they were ignorant of the enormity of their sin and the high cost of forgiveness. They were like the rich young ruler who didn't really see himself as a condemned sinner before God (Mark 10:17-27), but they were not like the people at Pentecost who were cut to the heart and cried out, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

We get the impression that these questioners were interested in bargaining with God and "buying Him off," for they kept raising the bid. "Shall we bring a few calves as burnt offerings? If that's not enough, maybe we could offer a thousand sacrifices, such as Solomon offered [1 Kings 3:4; 8:63]? Would rivers of oil please Him? How about the ultimate sacrifice: our own flesh and blood offered on the altar, as Abraham did with Isaac?"

But God doesn't bargain with sinners, and none of the sacrifices they offered to bring could have cleansed them from their sins.

"Doing penance" without truly repenting and trusting God's mercy only multiplies the sin and deadens the conscience. Thinking they

were good enough to please God, the people asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" He replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28-29). True saving faith comes from a heart that's been broken in repentance and realizes that no amount of good works can atone for sin (Acts 20:21; 26:20; Eph. 2:8-9).

The prophet spoke to the people (Micah 6:8) and told them exactly what the Lord wanted each of them to do. It was a personal matter that each individual sinner had to consider. His reply emphasized moral and ethical conduct, not religious ceremonies.

Of course, we can't "do justly" unless we've been justified by faith and are right with God (Ps. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:1-8). And how can we "love mercy" if we've not personally experienced God's mercy? (Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5). If we want to "walk humbly with [our] God," we must first bow humbly before Him, confess our sins, and claim His promise of forgiveness (Luke 14:11; James 4:10).

Our Lord's parable about the Pharisee and publican in the temple (Luke 18:9-14) illustrates all three points.

The publican was justified by faith, not by doing the kind of good works that the Pharisee boasted about. Since the publican depended on God's mercy to save him, he humbled himself before the Lord. The Pharisee, on the other hand, informed God (and whoever was listening in the temple) how good he was and therefore how much he deserved eternal life.

To make Micah 6:8 a salvation text is to misunderstand what the prophet was saying to God's disobedient covenant people. None of us can do what God requires until first we come to God as broken sinners who need to be saved. Unsaved people who think they are doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God are only fooling themselves, no matter how moral their lives may be. "Not by works righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

The people to whom Micah ministered simply didn't get the point of his messages. The very fact that they were so guilty before God should have motivated them to turn from their shallow

religion, humble themselves, and seek God's mercy. The only people God can save are lost people; the only people God can forgive are guilty people. If we see ourselves as God sees us, then we can by faith become what He wants us to become.

Three Things that Can Change Everything

**Do Justly
Love Mercy
Walk Humbly with Our God**

The Importance of These Three Things

They Reflect the Attributes and Characteristics of God

**God is Holy and Just "The Truth"
He always does what is Right**

**God is Merciful "The Way"
He is a God of Grace and Forgiveness**

**God Humbled Himself to Walk with Us
Jesus Himself**

Philippians 2:1-8

*1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,
2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

*5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

2. Because of impending judgment, trust the Lord (Micah 6:9-7:7)

For the second time in this message, Micah cried out to the people, "Listen!" (vv. 1, 9). Like the crowds that Jesus taught, these Jews had ears to hear His words, but they couldn't hear God's truth in those words (Matt. 13:9, 43). They lacked spiritual discernment.

God speaks about sin and its consequences (Micah 6:9-16).

The Lord called to the people of Jerusalem to fear His name and heed what He had to say; for without the fear of the Lord, they could have neither knowledge nor wisdom (Prov. 1:7).

God specifically condemned the merchants of the city for being deceptive in their business practices (Micah 6:10-12). They used weights and measures that were dishonest so that customers didn't get full value for their money.

Why did this sin grieve the Lord so much? Because by doing these illegal things, the businessmen were exploiting and abusing the poor and needy in the land for whom God has a special concern (Amos 8:4-10). The Mosaic economic system provided for the care of the poor and needy, but the wealthy merchants in Micah's time had abandoned the system. They robbed the poor of both justice and the necessities of life, a sin God could not overlook.

Moreover, along with making their own weights and measures and bribing the courts, the rich were openly violent (Micah 6:12; also see 2:2; 3:1-3). They forcibly evicted people from their houses and lands and left them helpless, without homes or any source of income. When the poor tried to protect themselves through the courts, the rich merchants lied about the situation and convinced the officials that their actions were right.

But God has ordained that people reap what they sow, whether good or evil (Hosea 8:7; Gal. 6:7-8). Therefore, judgment had to fall on the "robber barons" of the land. Indeed, God warned about two different kinds of judgments (Micah 6:13-16).

The first (vv. 13-15) was already in progress, slow and secret, but very thorough. *"Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins"* (v. 13).

The first judgment was the collapse of their economic system, including their crops (stolen farms), their investments (stolen money), and even their enjoyment of all that they had accumulated. Everything these merchant thieves had amassed for their pleasure would disappear, and whatever they tried to enjoy would bring them no pleasure at all.

The second judgment (Micah 6:16) would be sudden and open: the total ruin of the nation by the hand of Babylon.

That Micah should point to Babylon as the aggressor (4:10) is remarkable, because Babylon wasn't a major power on the international scene at that time. It was Assyria that everybody feared, and Assyria did ruin the Northern Kingdom in 722 and did do great damage to Judah in 701. But by the time Babylon was finished with Judah and Jerusalem, the nation would be in ruin and the people in derision. The people's sins found them out.

The Lord tried to use the judgment on the Northern Kingdom to awaken and warn the people of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, but they wouldn't listen. Their defense was "It can't happen here. We have the temple!" But they weren't obeying God's law or honoring His house. Instead, they were following the godless ways of two kings of Israel, Omri and Ahab, both of whom "did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before [them]" (1 Kings 16:25). They should have followed the godly ways of King David, because it was for David's sake that God held back His judgment for so long (11:13, 32, 34, 36; 15:4).

The prophet speaks of his sorrow (Micah 7:1-7). The prophets not only declared God's message with their lips, but they also felt the burden of the people on their hearts. Jeremiah wept over the sins of the nation in his day and wished he could weep even more (Jer. 9:1ff), and Micah lamented because there were no godly people left in the land. Looking for a godly person was as futile as looking for summer fruit after the harvest was over.

Micah compared the evil officials to hunters who wove clever nets and threw them over the helpless and trapped them. These officials and judges were skilled at weaving their nets (perverting the law so they could rob the unwary), but they weren't skilled at obeying God's laws. They were like briars and thorns that hurt people, when they should have been like concerned shepherds who helped people.

"The day of your watchmen" refers to the day of judgment when the watchmen on the walls would see the enemy approaching and call out to warn the people. God's prophets were His watchmen (Ezek. 3:18-21), constantly warning the nation, but the leaders wouldn't listen. They preferred lies to truth and this brought about a "time of... confusion" (Micah 7:4).

This confusion reached into every level of society. Not only was Micah grieved at the corruption of the officials, but also he was grieved at the unfaithfulness of the common people of the land (vv. 5-6). You couldn't trust anybody!

When truth is no longer the standard for society, then everything starts to fall apart; for faithfulness to our word is the cement that holds society together. It had come to the place where neighbor couldn't trust neighbor, friends couldn't trust each other. The basic unit of Jewish society, the family, was quickly falling apart. (In fact, Jesus quoted Micah 7:6 in Matt. 10:36.)

In the light of the terrible condition of the land and the judgment that was impending, wouldn't it have been a wise thing for the people to turn from their sin and trust the Lord? Would it not have been a smart thing for them to claim 2 Chronicles 7:14 and seek God's face so that He might heal their land? But sinners don't do wise things, because their eyes are blinded as they walk in the darkness (John 3:19-21).

Because of God's great mercies, trust the Lord (Micah 7:7-20)

The prophet reached a turning point when he looked away from the sins of the people and meditated on the faithfulness of the Lord. *"But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me"* (v. 7). He would "watch and

pray" and put his trust only in the Lord. This verse is the "bridge" that connects the sections on sin and judgment with this closing section on hope.

In this final section of Micah's third message, we must distinguish several voices: the nation (vv. 8-10), the prophet (vv. 11-13), the Lord (vv. 14-15), and the prophet again (vv. 16-20).

We must also realize that Micah is looking down through the centuries with prophetic vision to the time when Israel will come through great tribulation to come, "dress rehearsals" as it were. But the future will bring victory to God's people, not defeat, when the Lord fulfills His promises and establishes the kingdom.

The voice of the nation (Micah 7:8-10).

Perhaps the prophet is speaking on behalf of the remnant as he expresses their faith and courage. The enemy gloated over the defeated Jews and asked in derision, "Where is the Lord your God?" (v. 10). But the people trust God and have confidence that, though they were in darkness, they would see light; and though they had been defeated, they would eventually conquer their enemies and trample them like mud in the streets.

Since these events did not occur after the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, they must be assigned to a future time. According to Jesus, the Jewish nations will experience great tribulation and become the target of all the Gentile nations in the end times (Matt. 24:15-31). In the end, however, Christ will return and give His people great victory.

The voice of the prophet (Micah 7:11-14).

Micah speaks to the city of Jerusalem and assures her that, though she had been attacked and destroyed, she would one day be rebuilt. The prophets speak in glowing terms of Israel having a new city and temple (Isa. 2:1-5; Ezek. 40-48). Not only that, but also the boundaries of the nation would be expanded to include more territory than she had before.

In the light of this great promise, the prophet lifted his heart to the Lord in prayer (Micah 7:14) and asked Him to be the faithful

Shepherd of Israel and care for His people (see 5:4; Isa. 40:11; Ps. 80:1). Micah longed for "the good old days" when the land was fruitful and peaceful and the people were like obedient sheep who followed their Shepherd.

The voice of the Lord (Micah 7:15).

God replied to His faithful servant and assured him that He would indeed watch over His flock and care for them, just as He had when they had departed from the land of Egypt. The "exodus" image is sometimes used in Scripture to point to the "exodus" of the Jews in the end times from the nations of the world to their own land (Isa. 11:15-12:6; 35:8-10; 43:14-20; 51:9-11). God will perform great wonders for His people at a time in their history when the nations are united against them.

The voice of the prophet (Micah 7:16-20).

When Israel departed from Egypt and God opened the sea, the other nations heard about it and feared (Ex. 15:14-16; Josh. 2:8-11). But the wonders the Lord will do for Israel in the last days will startle the nations even more. The Gentiles will see the power of God and be ashamed and unable to act. They will come out of their hiding places to submit to the Lord. It will mean total victory for Israel.

But the most important event will not be Israel's victory over her enemies but God's victory over Israel. The prophet was confident of the unchanging character of God. "Who is a God like You?" (Micah 7:18) reminds us of the meaning of Micah's name, "Who is like the Lord?" He is a God who pardons sin, forgives transgressions, and delights in showing mercy. He shows compassion to His people and deals with their sins with finality.

Micah knew that God would not go back on His promises or His covenant agreements with His people. The people weren't always true to Jehovah, but He will be true to His people (2 Tim. 2:12-13). What He promised to Abraham, the father of the nation, He will fulfill in his many descendants. Micah could have sung

How firm a foundation, ye saints of
the Lord,

Is laid for your faith in His excel-
lent Word.

In the coming of Jesus Christ to this world, God fulfilled some of the promises He made to the Jews (Luke 1:72-73), and He will fulfill the rest of His promises as well. "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Cor. 1:20).

Few passages in Scripture contain so much "distilled theology" as Micah 7:18-20. We see in them a reflection of what God told Moses on the mount (Ex. 34:5-7).

The better we know the character of God, the more we can trust Him for the future.

The better we know the promises and covenants of God, the more peace we will have in our hearts when things fall apart.

When Micah wrote this confession of his faith, the future seemed hopeless; yet he had hope because he knew God and fully trusted Him.

No matter how dark the day, the light of God's promises is still shining. No matter how confusing and frightening our circumstances, the character of God remains the same. You have every reason to trust Him!