

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 4 Micah

Opening prayer: Lord our God, we come to you as a small group, asking you to accept us and keep us as your own. Strengthen us in the faith. Lord our God, through your Spirit. Amen.

Today chapter 6. Next Sunday with will talk about chapter 7.

Chapter 6 Pleading present repentance because of past redemption

In this chapter Micah calls the people to listen to what the Lord has to say to Israel.

Read Micah 6:1-2 In court with the Lord.

V 1-2 This is the beginning of the third and final message of Micah to the nations of the world and to Israel, in particular. Jehovah has a contention with His people, Israel. Micah pictures a court of law, with Israel "on trial" before the Lord. In the presence of unshakable witnesses, the mountains and the hills as the strong foundations of the earth, the court comes to order. The mountains are asked to listen. The mountains have been the site of Israel's idolatry and on the other hand they are the symbols of God's eternity.

Psalm 90: 2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

In His court, God will bring His complaint against Israel. While Israel was strong politically at this point, the Lord wasn't pleased with them.

Read Micah 6:3-5 The Lord's complaint against His people.

V 3 Jehovah pleads with His people to bring a charge against Him. As Israel steps up to the witness stand, God asks them, "What have I done to you?" He cites the leaders Moses, Aaron, and Miriam that instructed them. God is reminding them of their history. Adam Clarke's Commentary mentions the roles of each. Moses taught the tradition of judgments, Aaron made atonement for the people as high priest., and Miriam was to instruct the females. He has done nothing but good to Israel, and has been repaid with rejection and rebellion. The word "burden" signifies to wear down, to cause someone to become impatient, or to become physically tired. The Lord asks how he has caused them to become so weary of him that they have ceased to obey him. Their impatience cannot be due to inactivity on his part, for he has done much for them.

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V 4 He recites their past history- how He redeemed them out of Egypt and gave them godly leaders. Not only did God not do evil to Israel, He also did them an enormous amount of good. God's case against Israel looks pretty good.

V 5 God did not permit Balaam to curse His people. After meeting with King Balak of Moab, Balaam prophesied over Israel four times. As he spoke forth God's word, he did not curse Israel - but he blessed them each time. However, later on Balaam figured out a way to get his reward from Balak. Balaam advised the Moabites on how to entice the people of Israel with prostitutes and idolatry. He could not curse Israel directly, so he came up with a plan for Israel to bring a curse upon themselves. Balak followed Balaam's advice, and Israel fell into sin, worshiping Baal of Peor and committing fornication with Midianite women. For this God plagued them, and 24,000 men died. In light of this, Israel must remember that God could never be persuaded to curse Israel, except if they brought curses on themselves through their own disobedience and rebellion. Like a great lawyer in court, God shows Israel that if they feel cursed in any way, it is entirely their responsibility. Matthew Henry comments that if they remember what God has done for them and for their forefathers they should be convinced to be forever in His service.

Read Micah 6: 6-7 The answer of His people: "What can I do?"

In the next two verses Micah speaks representing what the nation would respond.

V 6-7 These were the things that Israel was doing that displeased God. This is a question asked out of bitterness and resentment. Israel calls out to God from the witness stand, and says: "Just what do You want from me?" We can almost hear Israel shouting at God from the witness stand. "You ask too much, God. Nothing will satisfy You. If we brought thousands of rams or rivers of oil or even my own firstborn it would not be enough. You are unreasonable." The reference to bringing their firstborn alludes to the pagan gods who required child sacrifice. The number of rams and rivers of oil allude an affluent person who can afford to pay for his sin. Schultz comments that this is a person who sees himself as equal to God.

Read Micah 6: 8 The reply of the Lord: "He has shown you."

This is the key verse not only to this chapter but to the whole book of Micah. It is the verse that we remember even when we can't quote the source. Schultz says that this reply comes from the mountains that are overhearing. Stanley describes

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this as "one of the most sublime and impassioned declarations of spiritual religion that the Old Testament contains." The reply of the Lord: "He has shown you." God stops the shouting of the angry defendant from the witness box. "You act as if it is some mystery what I require of you. In point of fact, it is no mystery at all. I have shown you clearly what is good and what I require of you." The Lord answers the contentious witness in open court. "What I require of you isn't complicated. Simply do three things." Act in a just, fair way towards others. Treat them the way you want to be treated." "Don't just show mercy, but love to show it. Give others the same measure of mercy you want to receive from Me." "Remember who I am - your God. If you keep that in mind, you will walk humbly before Me." Spurgeon says that talking about our humility is hypercritical. "Humility must be in the heart, and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs." Humility suggest sorrow over sin, the opposite of a proud attitude.

V 8 The condition of the heart and its relation to God are the primary considerations in the Old Testament religion. The externalities of religion were only of value in relation to the condition of the heart. God has proven His case before the court. Israel is afflicted, but it is not because of the neglect or disregard of God. Their own sin brought their affliction upon them. In addition, what God required of them was not mysterious or too difficult - they simply did not do it. We are going to look at several verses that confirm for us that the message of God's love and patience with His people is shown throughout the Bible in both the Old and New Testament. Even Jesus condemned those who go through the motions but don't have a true heart for God.

Read Matthew 7:21-23

According to Jesus in the verses above, these individuals believed they were saved and called Jesus "Lord," but they did not live out their faith.

Read Matthew 23:25-26

The Pharisees' greed and self-indulgence, especially their lust for public religious acclaim, are inner motivations that impact external behavior. The Pharisees' emphasis on external piety does not result in purity. In order to be truly pure, they need to first purify their hearts. A

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Read Romans 10:9-10

Paul has just concluded quoting from

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

¹¹ Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

There, God says to Israel that His command for them is not hidden or far away; it is already in their mouths and hearts. Paul has written that this is true, as well, for the "word of faith" in Christ. This "word of faith" is a reference to the gospel: the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. This message is near Israel's mouths and hearts. Now Paul clarifies what this word of faith is; he explicitly describes what the Jewish people of his day should welcome into their mouths and hearts. He writes that instead of seeking to become righteous by following the law, they should confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord. He is the Messiah. Also, they should believe in their hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead. If they do those things, they will be saved.

Read Micah 6:9-12 God sees the injustice and deceit of Israel.

The rest of this chapter is directed to "the man of wisdom" whoever he is, in the city, exposing the nation's sin and showing why the nation suffered. The word "listen" is to attention. The name of God stands for his character, so it means taking God's wrath seriously and adjusting one's lifestyle accordingly.

V 9-12 God can't overlook dishonesty, violence, crookedness, lying and deceit. Israel felt the rod of God, but did not hear it. The rod is the Law of God through Moses. God tells them to hear the Rod, both in the sense of the rod as a picture of the corrective discipline of God, and in the sense that the Rod can be personified as the voice of God Himself. God was angry with Israel for plain old cheating in money matters. They lied and stole and cheated one another, all for the sake of making some money off each other. The sin of Israel went further than just cheating others in business and commerce; they also made themselves rich through plain violence. They could expect the judgment of God for such sin. Boice says "No

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society is ever entirely upright or godly; there are always evil people in it. But in a well-functioning society the evil is suppressed and those of good character are prominent and rule the land. In times of moral breakdown this is inverted." When you listen to the news you begin to feel that we are an inverted society. When you don't listen to the news and instead observe what most people do, your opinion may be a little higher. Riches and violence are often partners in the same business. Man tends to equate material possessions with influence and power. Some think that the accumulation of wealth gives a person the right to abuse his fellowmen. We tend to forget that our possessions are only entrusted to us and we have to give an account. Micah emphasizes social sins more than sins of idolatry, though ultimately, they are closely intertwined in his thinking. The question in verse 11 How can I forgive men who use false scales and weights? The response to that question is without repentance of those acts, God can't forgive. The society of Micah's time was characterized by violence, lying, and deceit. False promises were uttered and claims made that were not fulfilled.

Read Micah 6:13-16 God's judgment on greedy and wicked Israel.

V13-15 God would judge them then and now. God promises a tragic end for their ill-gotten gains. According to this verse it was because of the people's sins that God was to bring ruin on them. He will allow them no satisfaction or blessing in what they possess. Instead of walking in the ways of the Lord, they walked in the sinful example of wicked kings before them, and in the counsels of the ungodly. They will become a laughing stock of other nations. The land was to fall under the devastation of the sword and be totally unproductive. The greed that motivated the rich in that day would no longer be gratified because of the desolation of the land.

V 16 They follow in the way of Omri and Ahab. These two kings, father and son, were set aside and judged severely. Omri was the sixth king of Israel. He was a successful military campaigner who extended the northern kingdom of Israel. Nothing is said in Scripture about the lineage of Omri. He is credited with the construction of Samaria and establishing it as his capital. Although the Bible is silent about other actions taken during his reign, he is described as doing more evil than all the kings who preceded him. Extrabiblical sources such as the Mesha Stele and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III mention his name. In the Mesha Stele, Omri's rule over Moab is unchallenged by even the rebellious Moabite king,

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and in the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, Omri's name is as famous in the northern kingdom of Israel as David's was famous in the southern kingdom of Judah. Despite impressive political accomplishments, Omri is condemned for his religious policies,

1 Kings 16: 25-26 Omri did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; he did more evil than all who were before him. 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and in the sins that he caused Israel to commit, provoking the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols.

Micah announces judgment on the people because they have kept Omri's statutes. In their pagan religious practices, the people were no better than the generation of Omri, the notorious king who headed the dynasty that produced Ahab, the husband of Jezebel, and allowed Baal worship in Israel. King Ahab is arguably the most evil king of Israel. He was the first Israelite king to marry a heathen woman, the beautiful but devilish Jezebel. Together they became one of the most sinful couples in Biblical history. Ahab built an altar, in the capital city of Samaria, to his wife's pagan god. These wicked kings of Israel in the northern kingdom had been a corrupting influence even on the southern kingdom of Judah. They replaced the Lord, their true counselor, with the ways of these wicked human kings led to desolation. Hope remains, however, because God still claims them calling them my people.

Closing prayer: Give us, o Lord, an eye for injustice. For it is only when are able to recognize injustice and feel its awful sting that we will be moved to make things right. Give us, o Lord, a tender heart. Sometimes we are too hard-hearted to recognize when we have been uncaring, unfeeling, or unkind. Help us to mend our ways, in Jesus' name Amen.

Micah 6:1-2	Micah 6:9-12	Matthew 7:21-23
Micah 6:3-5	Micah 6:13-16	Matthew 23:25-26
Micah 6: 6-7		Romans 10:9-10
Micah 6: 8		