

Micah 6 - The Coming Judgment; The Predicament of Man

IV. God's conviction and judgment upon His people for their failure to practice true religion and the ultimate restoration of Israel (Micah 6:1—7:20)

- (1) God's court case against Israel (6:1-16)
 - (A) Opening appeal to mountains and hills to form the jury (6:1-2)
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Micah 6

IV. God's conviction and judgment upon His people for their failure to practice true religion and the ultimate restoration of Israel (Micah 6:1—7:20)

- (1) God's court case against Israel (6:1-16)
 - (A) Opening appeal to mountains and hills to form the jury (6:1-2)

1 Hear now what the LORD is saying, "Arise, plead your case before the **mountains**, And let the hills hear your voice.

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1 Please hear what the LORD says: "Get up and make your case before the mountains, and let the hills listen to your voice.

1 Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

- "Hear now" - the language implies that this third and final message of Micah (6:1—7:20) is to all the nations of the world, with Israel center stage. God's contention is with His people Israel, but we can all learn important lessons...

- "...mountains" - kingdoms (Cf. Dan 2:35,44). Many don't recognize that the "Kingdom from Heaven" is the 5th in a list of 5!

2 "Listen, you mountains, to the indictment by the LORD, And you enduring foundations of the earth, Because the LORD has a case against His people; And He will dispute with Israel.

2 "Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of the LORD, And you enduring foundations of the earth, Because the LORD has a case against His people; Even with Israel He will dispute.

2 Listen, you mountains, to the LORD's argument! Listen, you strong foundations of the earth, because the LORD has a dispute with his people, and he will set out his case before Israel.

2 Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.

- God is calling Israel to court, with the nations as spectators. And then God does an astonishing thing: instead of lodging a charge against them, He asks, "*What am I guilty of?*" *What condescension of Almighty God Himself!*

(B) God responds to charges of oppression (6:3)

3 "My people, what have I done to you, And how have I wearied you? Answer Me.

3 "My people, what have I done to you, And how have I wearied you? Answer Me.

3 "My people, what have I done to you, and how have I offended you? Answer me!

3 O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

- This is similar to the situation before the prophet Malachi: after their return from captivity, they became prosperous *and complacent!*

- God lays out the record of His dealings with them

— Had He wearied them by excessive demands? (Cf. Is 43:23-24) Or by unfulfilled promises? (Jer 2:31)

(C) Specific charge (6:4-8)

(a) Review of God's past faithfulness (6:4-5)

(i) Deliverance from Egypt (6:4a)

(ii) Moses, Miriam, Aaron given as leaders (6:4b)

4 "Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of slavery, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and **Miriam**.

4 "Indeed, 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.

4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and ransomed you from the house of slavery, sending Moses, Aaron, and Miriam into your presence.

4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

- "...Miriam" - it is interesting to notice how often God points to the Exodus from Egypt as one of His most conspicuous demonstrations...Miriam is also included as a leader sent by God.

Miriam

- The sister of Moses and Aaron (Ex 2:4-10; 1 Chr 6:3)
- Her name is prominent in the history of the Exodus
- She is called "the prophetess" (Ex 15:20)
- She took the lead in the song of triumph after the passage of the Red Sea
- She also almost led a rebellion against Moses because of his Cushite wife, but God Himself straightened that out (Num 12:1-15)
- She died at Kadesh during the second encampment at that place, toward the close of the wanderings in the wilderness, and was buried there (Num 20:1)

(iii) Reversal of Balaam's curses (6:5a)

(iv) Deliverance into Canaan (6:5b)

5 "My people, remember now What **Balak** king of Moab planned And what **Balaam** son of Beor answered him, *And what happened from Shittim to Gilgal*, So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD."

5 "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."

5 "My people, recall how king Balak of Moab deliberated, and how Beor's son Balaam counseled him from Shittim to Gilgal, so that you may know the righteousness of the LORD."

5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

- "...Balak - empty, spoiler"; son of Zippor and king of the Moabites (Num 22:2,4)

— From fear of the Israelites, who were encamped near the confines of his territory, he applied to Balaam to curse them; but in vain (Joshua 24:9)

- "...Balaam" - "lord of the people"; foreigner or glutton. The son of Beor, he was a man of some rank among the Midianites (Num 31:8; 31:16).

— He resided at Pethor in Mesopotamia (Num 23:7 Deut 23:4)

– "...Shittim to Gilgal" – the Israelites were forced to go all the way around Edom and then they came to Moab

— Shittim was the last camping spot before they entered Moab. Gilgal was the first camping spot when they entered the Promised Land.

Balaam

Though dwelling among idolaters, he had some knowledge of the true God and was held in such reputation that it was supposed that he whom he blessed was blessed, and he whom he cursed was cursed.

When the Israelites were encamped on the plains of Moab, on the east of Jordan, Balak sent for Balaam "from Aram, out of the mountains of the east," to curse them, but by the remarkable interposition of God he was utterly unable to fulfil Balak's wish, however desirous he was to do so. God used his own donkey to rebuke the prophet (Num 22:21-34). The apostle Peter refers to this as an historical event, and the "way of Balaam" as selling his gift for profit (2 Peter 2:15-16).

But God did not permit them to be cursed (Num 22-24). Balak took Balaam on four mountain tops, one by one, but Balaam could not curse Israel. God will not allow any man to curse His people (Ps 105:14-15). As Balaam looked down upon the camp of Israel from a mountain top, he would have seen the encampment as a cross!

Though Balaam could not curse Israel, yet he suggested a mode by which the divine displeasure might be caused to descend upon them (Num 25:1). If you can't fight them, join (and corrupt) them! The "doctrine of Balaam" (Rev 2:14) is an allusion to the fact that it was through this teaching of Balaam that Balak learned that the way by which the Israelites might be defeated: leading them into sin.

Balaam was constrained to utter prophecies regarding the future of Israel of wonderful magnificence and beauty of expression (Num 24:5-9) including a "star out of Jacob" (Num 24:17). In a battle between Israel and the Midianites, Balaam was slain while fighting on the side of Balak (Num 31:8).

(b) Specific charge: lack of heartfelt covenant obedience (6:6-8)

6 With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?

6 With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?

6 How am I to present myself in the LORD's presence and bow in the presence of the High God? Should I present myself with burnt offerings, with year-old calves?

6 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

- "...Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?" - every person who believes in God asks this question: "How am I going to approach Him?"
- In Leviticus a series of offerings are specified; will they be adequate? Nothing reveals a proud heart more than man's insistence on "doing something for God." *This has it all backwards:*

7 Does the LORD take pleasure in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? **Shall I give Him my firstborn for my wrongdoings, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**

7 Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with endless rivers of oil? Am I to give my firstborn to pay for my rebellion, the fruit of my body in exchange for my soul?

7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

- The Lord doesn't need our generosity. We can't add to the completed work of the cross. *It is blasphemy to even try!*

— In Leviticus, the presentation of the meal offerings, and the peace offerings *had to be preceded by the burnt offering*

— The presentation of ourselves and our substance could only be made *after* the sins had been dealt with and a *relationship* had been established

- "...Shall I give *Him* my firstborn *for* my wrongdoings, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" - this was an understandable question since they were surrounded by pagan people who offered human sacrifices to Molech and Baal (Jer 19:5; 32:35)

- Two of the most godless kings of the Southern Kingdom indulged in human sacrifices:

Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chr 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6)

— Child sacrifice was expressly prohibited (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut 12:31; 18:10)

— The worshipers hypothetically wonder whether sacrificing their firstborn children would atone for their sins

— This, in fact, is what King Ahaz did (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chr 28:3)

— The Ammonites sacrificed their children to their god, Molech (Lev 20:2-5; 1 Kings 11:5)

This detestable practice spread to Phoenicia, Canaan, and even to the Israelites themselves on occasion. For God's people to engage in child sacrifice would only increase their sins because God expressly prohibited it (Lev 18:21; Deut 18:10). Jeremiah condemned such a horrible ritual (Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:32). For the Biblical teaching on redeeming the "firstborn" (Ex 13:2,13; 22:29; 34:20).

Since the people of God's covenant community were willing to bring any of these sacrifices to the Lord, they doubtless believed that he was bringing unjust charges against them. What the Lord really wanted most of all, however, was not the offerings but the hearts, allegiance, and obedience of the offerers (Cf. Rom 12:1; Heb 10:4).

The truth taught in this passage is basically the same as that expressed in 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; 50:8-15,23; 51:16-19; Is 1:11-15; Jer 6:19-20; 7:22-23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Zech 7:4-10.

God did require that they give Him the firstborn male of everything that was born to them: a cow, sheep, ox, or their son. However, anything that was *unclean*, *they were to redeem* (Ex 13:2; Num 18:15f). Man, too, was unclean, and thus could not be offered! He, too, was to be redeemed—both locally and ultimately!

Redemption: the purchase back of something that had been lost, by the payment of a ransom. The idea running through all these texts is that *payment must be made* for our redemption. The debt against us is not viewed as simply cancelled, but is fully paid. Christ's blood or life, which he surrendered for them, is the "ransom" by which the deliverance of His people from the servitude of sin and from its penal consequences, is secured. It is the plain doctrine of Scripture that:

Christ saves us neither by the mere exercise of power, nor by his doctrine, nor by his example, nor by the moral influence which he exerted, nor by any subjective influence on his people, whether natural or mystical, but as a satisfaction to divine justice, as an expiation for sin, and as a ransom from the curse and authority of the law, thus reconciling us to God by making it consistent with his perfection to exercise mercy toward sinners... — Hodge's Systematic Theology

8 He has told you, mortal one, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

8 He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

8 He has made it clear to you, mortal man, what is good and what the LORD is requiring from you—to act with justice, to treasure the LORD's gracious love, and to walk humbly in the company of your God.

8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

- This verse stands as the motto of the Alcove of Religion in the reading room of the Congressional Library in Washington. Numerous accolades have been showered on it.

Politicians have quoted it often in their election campaigns (if only more would practice it!). The rabbis who commented on this verse called it a one-line summary of the whole law.

- A joy and delight of both liberals and legalists because they think that it presents a works religion!

- ***What Micah is doing is answering the questions of sincere people who had not been taught the Word of God.***

— None of the foregoing assumptions embodied in their questions is what God requires. External religion without an internal experience is absolutely without value.

— Classic passages: 1 Sam 15:22; Is 1:11-20; Jer 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 4:5; 5:15,22-23. We must be "born again."

Deut 10:12-13:

12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

13 and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

Micah 6:1-8 is a divine indictment, containing the further charges of dishonest business practices, lying, and acts of violence. The sentence is a life of futility, frustration, scorn, and destruction. Here is an outline of the next section:

(1) Opening statement (v9)

(2) Catalog of commercial and social sins (v10-12)

(3) Announcement of punishment from God (v13-15)

(4) Summary statement (v16)

You are not saved by good works *because you do not have any good works!* It is addressed to "O Man"; that includes 21st century Man—Mr. and Mrs. Man. God requires three things:

(1) To do justly—that is, to have a righteousness to present to God; that will pass muster before God. You are to be honest and true.

(2) To love mercy—to be merciful in your dealings with others

(3) To walk humbly before thy God.

Remember Peter's summary of "the Law" in at the Council of Jerusalem:

Acts 15:10-11:

10 Since this *is the case*, why are you putting God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear?

11 But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

Paul also made it clear:

Rom 8:5-9:

5 For those who are in accord with the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are in accord with the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,
7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,
8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Righteousness is what God requires, but both the OT and NT makes it obvious that we cannot present our righteousness to God *because we don't have any!* If you can get to God by the route of Micah 6:8—by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God—and you can do that on your own, then when you get to heaven you can tell God to move over: now there's two of you!

Bypassing God's way was Cain's big problem: Attempting sanctification without prior justification. Micah will now demonstrate how far they all have fallen short of the righteousness God requires.

(D) Determination of Israel's guilt (6:9-12)

9 The voice of the LORD will call to the city— And it is sound wisdom to fear Your name: "Hear, you tribe. Who has designated its time?
9 The voice of the LORD will call to the city— And it is sound wisdom to fear Your name: "Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time?
9 The voice of the LORD cries out to the city— wisdom fears your name: "Heed the rod, and the one who prepared it!
9 The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.
- Unlike Amos, Micah is an urban prophet writing to the city dwellers...

10 "Is there still a person *in* the wicked house, *Along with treasures of wickedness*, And a short measure *that is cursed*?
10 "Is there yet a man in the wicked house, *Along with* treasures of wickedness And a short measure *that is cursed*?
10 Are there still wicked treasures in the house of the wicked, along with deceitful and abominable measuring standards?
10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?
- "...treasures of wickedness" - wealth accumulated through their unjust dealings
11 "Can I justify dishonest balances, And a bag of fraudulent weights?

11 "Can I justify wicked scales And a bag of deceptive weights?

11 Will I tolerate those who maintain deceptive standards and who use deceitful weights in their business?

11 Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?

- Dishonest business dealings (Cf. Lev 19:35-36; Deut 25:13-16; Amos 8:5)

12 "For the rich people of the city are full of violence, Her residents speak lies, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

12 "For the rich men of *the* city are full of violence, Her residents speak lies, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

12 Her rich people are filled with violence, and her inhabitants tell lies— their tongues speak deceitfully!

12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

(E) Sentenced: coming judgment (6:13-16)

13 "So also I will make *you* sick, striking you down, Making you desolate because of your sins.

13 "So also I will make *you* sick, striking you down, Desolating *you* because of your sins.

13 "Therefore I will make you ill when I attack you; I will bring you to ruin because of your offenses.

13 Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.

14 "You will eat, but you will not be satisfied, And your filth *will* be in your midst. You will try to remove *valuables for safekeeping*, But you will not save *it all*, And what you do save I will turn over to the sword.

14 "You will eat, but you will not be satisfied, And your vileness will be in your midst. You will try to remove *for safekeeping*, But you will not preserve *anything*, And what you do preserve I will give to the sword.

14 You'll eat, but you won't have enough; and hunger will be common among you. You'll horde things, but you won't save them, and what you preserve I'll give over to the sword.

14 Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.

- Shortages and famine ahead. Amos predicts a "famine of the Word of God" (Amos 8:11).

15 "You will sow but you will not harvest. You will tread the olive press but will not anoint yourself with oil; And *tread out* sweet wine, but you will not drink *any* wine.

15 "You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.

15 You'll plant, but you won't reap. You'll crush the olive harvest, but you'll have no oil to anoint yourself. You'll tread out the grapes, but you'll never drink wine.

15 Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.

- The next chapter will make it clear that God would give ample opportunity to turn to Him

— The people were going through the externalities of religion, but they were far from God

— There was dishonesty in their dealings. There was impurity in their lives. There was violence, lying, and deceit...every flagrant sin a barrier to blessing.

16 "The statutes of **Omri** And every **work of the house of Ahab** are maintained, And you walk by their plans. Therefore I will give you up for destruction, And your inhabitants for derision, And you will suffer the taunting of My people."

16 "The statutes of Omri And all the works of the house of Ahab are observed; And in their devices you walk. Therefore I will give you up for destruction And your inhabitants for derision, And you will bear the reproach of My people."

16 You keep Omri's statutes and observe the customs of the house of Ahab. Because you live according to their advice, I'll make you desolate and turn your inhabitants into an object of scorn. Therefore you will bear the shame of my people."

16 For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

"...Omri" - Omri was the father of Ahab; both were bad news

— Their evil influence was still impacting Micah's day almost *200 years later!*

— One should study the prophetic book (Micah) along with the historical book covering the same period. The historical account of Hezekiah in the Southern Kingdom and Ahab and Jezebel in the Northern Kingdom is found in 1 Kings 16.

— "...work of the house of Ahab" - Ahab and Jezebel made the worship of Baal the religion of Israel. [How about our own enforced paganism?]

Omri

When Elah was murdered by Zimri at Tirzah, Omri, his captain, was made king, in 931 BC (1 Kings 16:15-27). For four years there was continued opposition to his reign. Tibni, another claimant to the throne, led the opposing party; but at the close of that period all his rivals were defeated, and he became king of Israel, "Tibni died and Omri reigned" (927 BC).

By his vigor and power he gained great eminence and consolidated his kingdom. He fixed his dynasty on the throne so firmly that it continued during four succeeding reigns. Tirza was for six years the seat of his government; then he moved the capital to Samaria, where he died, and was succeeded by his son Ahab. "He wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him." Beth-omri, "the house" or "city of Omri," is the name usually found on Assyrian inscriptions for Samaria.

In the Stele of Mesha (the "Moabite Stone"), which was erected in Moab about twenty or thirty years after Omri's death, it is recorded that Omri oppressed Moab till Mesha delivered the land: "Omri, king of Israel, oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab" (2 Kings 1:1; 3:4-5).

The Moabite Stone

It was discovered on August 19, 1868, by a German missionary. It was 3ft 10 inches high and 2ft broad. With the exception of a very few variations, the Moabite language in which the inscription is written is identical with the Hebrew. It records that "Omri took the land of Medeba, and occupied it in his day and in the days of his son forty years."

It consisted of thirty-four lines, written in Hebrew-Phoenician characters. It was set up by Mesha in about 900 BC, as a record and memorial of his victories. It records:

- (1) Mesha's wars with Omri
- (2) his public buildings
- (3) his wars against Horonaim

This inscription in a remarkable degree supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha as recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27.

There are tragic parallels to our own country. The immorality at the highest offices of the land, in the Congress, and in Washington in general, is deplorable. In a representative republic, the responsibility is even more widespread: they are all *our employees!*