

Diagnosis, Prescription, Prognosis

The Book of Micah

Outline

- I. How to treat an illness.
 - A. Three parts to treatment:
 1. **Diagnosis**—the process of identifying a disease, condition, or injury from its signs and symptoms.
 2. **Prescription**—the remedy of the problem.
 3. **Prognosis**— the final outcome from the diagnosis to the prescription.
 - B. Treatment for spiritual illness is the same procedure as the physical.
 1. Micah, acting much like a physician’s assistant, illustrates the diagnosis of Israel’s spiritual illness, the prescribed remedy (by God) for the illness, and the prognosis.
- II. General information about the person and book of Micah.
 - A. By the time Micah prophesies, both Northern and Southern Kingdoms have become very affluent and very prosperous.
 1. Corruption raises its head.
 2. Injustice goes rampant.
 3. Faith in God is exchanged with self-reliance.
 - B. Micah is a “pre-exilic” prophet, prophesying a coming judgment on God’s people.
 1. Micah prophesies to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms around 800 BC.
 - C. The historical context in the Bible can be found in II Kings 14-20.
 - D. Micah’s name means “Who is like God?” and lived in Moresheth, a small country town 25 west of Bethlehem.
 - E. Micah prophesied the same time as Isaiah, Amos and Hosea prophesied.
- IV. Diagnosis.
 - A. Five “spiritual illnesses” are mentioned in Micah:
 1. Idolatry.
 2. Injustice.
 3. Deception.

4. Corruption between civil and spiritual leaders.
5. Division within families.

B. God's question to Israel:

1. "What have I done to you to deserve this?" (6:3-4).

V. Prescription.

A. Three things God prescribes (6:6-8)

1. Practice justice.
2. Love mercy
3. Walk humbly with the Lord.

VI. Prognosis.

A. Chapter 4 is good news—the last days and the new kingdom.

B. The great promise.

1. Micah 7:18-19

- a. **Who is a God like You, who pardons wrongdoing
And passes over a rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights in mercy.
He will again take pity on us;
He will trample on our wrong doings.
Yes, You will cast all their sins
Into the depths of the sea.**

2. The Jews every Rosh Hashanah read Micah 7:18-19 and practice *Tashlich* which means "to cast out". They would go to the sea or a river and cast out chunks of bread representing their sins into the water, and their sins would be carried away forever.

C. Micah 5:2—the prophesy of the birthplace of the Messiah.

1. **His going forth are from *everlasting* from the ancient days.**

- a. Everlasting = *The days beyond the vanishing point.*

D. Jesus is the "sea" where our sins are cast.

1. Isaiah 53:4 **However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore,
And our pains that He carried... the Lord has caused the wrongdoing of us
all To fall on Him.**

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Sermon Notes

You have pains in your chest... you go to the doctor... if you had the sniffles... or a slight fever you would not probably run to the doctor... but chest pains!... that will get you there... *“Doctor, what’s going on? Tell me!”*

So the doctor starts his **diagnosis** of the apparent problem... takes your blood pressure... your temperature... maybe an EKG... *“There’s definitely something going on here”* he says...so more diagnostics... a stress test... an echocardiogram...a few internal pictures of the heart...

You definitely have a problem! .. the diagnosis is in... you have clogged arteries... you have heart disease... How’s that possible?.... so the doctor begins a battery of questions... *What do you eat, what’s your diet like?...Typical American diet... Pizza, hamburgers, fries, ice cream, fried chicken... pretty healthy really.*

Your lifestyle has made you sick! He says..... do you exercise?... I walk to the refrigerator! ...do you have stress in your life.... of course... well... if you don’t change your lifestyle you are going to die!

So the doctor begins to **prescribe** a solution to the problems... *first we will unplug your arteries... a few stints, maybe a bypass or two... but then you have to change your lifestyle...you must change your diet... you must exercise... get enough sleep and get rid of your stress....*

*What you do after the operation will determine the final prognosis ...*If “diagnosis” is the process of identifying a disease, condition, or injury from its signs and symptoms....and “**prescription**” is the doctor’s remedy of the problem ... then the **prognosis** is the final outcome from the diagnosis to the prescription.

What every cardiologist will tell you is that *they* will prescribe the medical procedure... the follow up medications.... But few change their lifestyles that put them in their condition... after the scare of death is not knocking on their door...usually it is back to life as usual...

Warning, warning warning....life as usual!

Now that may sound crazy to you... *how many wake-up calls do people need to change their lifestyles?...*but the fact is... that is an accurate illustration of flawed sinful human nature...what is true for the physical unfortunately is true for the spiritual....this doctor visit certainly could be an allegory for God’s people Israel.... and sadly it could also be an allegory for us today as well....

The book of Micah could be looked at in a few ways... but this idea of Diagnosis...prescription and Prognosis does us well... The people of Israel have an illness.... A spiritual illness.... They are sick.... But they slid into their spiritual illness over time and now have been living with it to where they don’t even know they’re sick....they think the pains in their chest is normal.

So God sends a prophet... Micah.... To reveal their illness to them... Micah gives them a scathing diagnosis... the diagnosis is much like the physician's diagnosis... *you're sick... Here's how to cure your spiritual illness...the prescription... if you don't do it...you will surely die!... but if you heed my prescription... the prognosis looks good....* That's Micah in a small nutshell...it is a message for us as well...Before we get to the doctor's office for our diagnosis.... A few things about Micah.

Part of my goal for going through the minor prophets is to help us understand the Old Testament better... The Old Testament intimidates most people... what helps is to understand something about the history of things... the context.

We've looked at Israel being split into two kingdoms... the northern and southern kingdoms... both kingdoms strayed from God... both became unfaithful to Him...By Micah's time...both kingdoms had become very affluent...

Both kingdoms were experiencing immense material prosperity... now get this... when a nation or empire experiences prosperity for a length of time...

1. Corruption raises its head... Greed overtakes integrity especially in the ruling class.
2. Injustice goes rampant... between the haves and the have nots....and the most tragic:
3. Faith in God is exchanged with self-reliance... "*we don't need a God... we have done all this ourselves!*"

And the more a people strays from God.... Pushes Him out of their lives.... the more chaotic and decadent the nation goes.

So...the prophets were sent by God to send messages to His people... usually to warn Israel of impending judgment if they did not repent... turn around and go back to God...

Of course they didn't... so they go through God's judgment... His judgment on the northern kingdom was pretty much desolation and desecration of Israel by the Assyrians...beginning about 740 BC... only a remnant remained. ...

As we've seen the southern kingdom survived some 130+ years longer before God judges them by being conquered by the Babylonians...597 BC... resulting in exile to Babylon.... We have three time periods where God sent prophets to Israel...pre-exile...exile...post exile...Micah was pre-exile.... all that to show where Micah fits in...

The name Micah means "*Who is like God*"... not meaning that Micah is like God but rather it is more rhetorical "*Who is like God*" *meaning nobody is like God*.... So Micah is a strong name regarding the nature of God.... So all you Micah's you carry with you a great name.

This is what we know about Micah...it's all in verse 1.

Read 1:1

First of all... the word of the Lord came to Micah visually.... Micah "saw".... Some prophets "heard"... Micah saw... he saw visions from God... He's from Moresheth... Moresheth is a

small little agricultural town about 25 miles west of Bethlehem... about 17 miles from Tekoa... remember Tekoa?... that is where Amos was from.... both are country boys!

Remember I wondered if Tekoa Wa. Was named after the biblical town of Amos?...Here's what I found... Tekoa was originally a booming settlement named *Fork of the Creek*. In 1883, the Truax brothers established a saw mill on the west bank of Hangman Creek. In 1884, John McDonald, a railroad land agent, began buying right of ways for the soon to be coming railroad. Then came the moment when the growing community would receive it's final name. The infant community wanted a Post Office of it's own, and Fork of the Creek just didn't seem suitable to appear on the postal seal.

Mrs. Dan Truax, standing on the porch of her house on the west bank of Hangman Creek, looked at the large number of tents in the city, temporary shelters for the railroad workers and others. She suggested to her husband that they accept the counsel of Amos in the Bible and call the community Tekoa, from the Hebrew word meaning "city of tents", which was about all that Tekoa was at the time. And so the name stuck. In time, the tents were replaced by permanent wood frame buildings, and later, because of several fires in town, many wood buildings were replaced by brick ones, some of which stand to this day. The town was finally incorporated as The City of Tekoa on March 30, 1889...

Something we don't often realize is that God didn't send out one prophet at a time... maybe you have the impression that Isaiah is prophesying... when he's done another prophet steps on the stage... actually... at the time of Micah... Isaiah, Hosea, Amos were all prophesying to Israel.

Much like today... God has lifted up many preachers in our land... many good, wonderful preachers who preach God's word faithfully.... And the results are similar...a few listen.... But most of the nation has closed ears... that's how it was in Micah's day.

If you want the details of Micah's time period in the Bible... read through 2 Kings chapters 14-20...Micah's ministry lasts through three different kings of Judah...all three are kings of Judah: Jotham...a good king... Ahaz a not so good king... and Hezekiah a sometimes good king.... Micah is mentioned by Jeremiah some 100 years later....

Micah preaches to *both* kingdoms... the northern kingdom.... It says Samaria, the capital of Israel.... And the southern kingdom, Jerusalem being the capital of Judah... his ministry lasted some 50 years.

That's what we know about the man Micah....So let's get into the diagnosis.... Israel has some major arterial blockage... Israel has some real problems regarding their spiritual lives... and if they don't reverse their direction God is going to judge them.... Which He eventually does.

1. Diagnosis

What is sick about Israel?...there are many parts to their illness... here's five:

Read verses 2-6

*If you don't change Israel... you're coming down! ...Micah mentions the **high places**... God is going to come down from heaven and desecrate the high places... the mountains... what is in the mountains?... he says Samaria and Jerusalem... the capital cities... what was going on there?*

The “high places” were places of appalling idolatry... idolatry was at the heart of these capital cities.... **GOD’S PEOPLE! REMEMBER!**... on the high place was an ASHERA... a pole that symbolized the fertility goddess..... and a MASSEBAH, one or two stone pillars symbolizing the male fertility god.

All this was near the temple!.... so the first sickness of Israel is idolatry... we need to understand idolatry... the very root of idolatry is the self... pride... if we aren't worshipping the true God then we are worshipping the self... our invention of something that replaces God... a god of our invention we think will give us greater satisfaction and meaning.

“An idol is anything we place higher than God”....

1. Idolatry

Read verse 7

In the high places... there was a cultic prostitution... they would pay for a prostitute... remember... This is God's people!.... they were betrothed to God!... **NO OTHER GOD’S BEFORE ME**... but they would pay a prostitute why?... they were told that to be with a cultic prostitute would revive the forces of nature... especially in Spring... through the union of a god or goddess.... Israel is sick!

Of course they got all this mush from the pagans around them... [how much of our pagan neighbors influence us rather than we them?].... in chapter 2:

Read verses 2:1-2

The second sickness is injustice...

2. Injustice

Here's a principle so very vital for all of us... ***the heart of every transgression... we could say.... At the heart of every spiritual illness is pride... every act of revolt against God is pride... this is the conviction that God's will and God's word are optional...and that I have the right to choose what I want to do... I am perfectly capable of running my own life thank you!***

Israel is rampant with the illness of pride... here we have the picture of greedy wealthy people victimizing average ordinary people.... Micah is saying here... neighbor is taking advantage of neighbor...

They don't care about anyone but themselves.... The picture is tragic... the powerfully rich see EVERYTHING that a “man and his house has”... his property... his bank account...his inheritance.... And takes it from him.

Injustice = the violation of “right”.

3. Deception

Read 3:5

In other words... unless they are prevented from doing so...these “prophets” will lead the people astray.

In the day there were legitimate prophets and false prophets... I think I mentioned last week that there were actually prophet schools in that time... all the prophets in the Bible were legitimate prophets from God... but there were others who were not legitimate... as one commentator said *“they were running a non-prophet organization...”*

This whole thing about **when they have something to bite with their teeth, they call out peace... but against him who puts nothing in their mouths...they set themselves apart for war.** refers to the idea that if you fed these guys... if you gave them special treatment... and you wined and dined them.... They would tell you what they want you to hear.

They didn't care about the truth... they wanted a good meal and they would say anything you want!... of course this does NOT go on today does it?... how many preachers tell others what they want to hear so their church grows and the money flows in.

4. Corruption between civil and spiritual leaders.

Read 3:9-11

Twist everything that is straight.... Really?... leaders do that?... Politicians do that?... I'm shocked!...I have come to the conclusion that there is only one place left to get it “straight”... it is not cable news... it is not today's political commentaries... the newspapers... I don't care what isle you're on... it's crooked. ... the only place to get it straight is God's word!

5. Division within families.

Read 7:6

Arguing...infighting... the home being torn apart... is this not happening also today?... Israel's problems continue on to this day!...Idolatry...Injustice...Deception...Corruption...Division...

In the middle of all this... God asks them a question... chapter 6... God says *“what have I done to you that you should act like this?”*

Read 6:3

When I was barely in High School... maybe 15 years old... not the brightest bulb... shouldn't probably tell you this... But just for excitement by best friend Ray and I thought it was exciting to sneak out of the house in the middle of the night.

We never did anything “bad”... I would get out of bed...put a pillow under the covers and my football helmet to look like my head...and get this...because the stairs from my room to the

downstairs front door creaked...I would jump out my second story window... we would walk down the street to “Sambos”...a very politically incorrect name for a restaurant...across the street from Disneyland.... Sambos was like a Denny’s open 24 hours...

We would have breakfast... then I would sneak back up the stairs to my room... this time... my mom was sitting on my bed sobbing.... She looked at me sobbing!... She thought for sure we were doing drugs... or drinking... or something..... I’ll never forget it...

“WHAT HAVE I DONE TO YOU...TO DESERVE THIS!?”

I didn’t know she was quoting scripture!...That really is a penetrating question... I think at first I thought... thought... “*this doesn’t have anything to do with anything you did or didn’t do as my mother*” ... but as the days went by during my 72 weeks of restriction I had much time to think.

I truly was violating the authority, honor and respect of my mother/parents... It really was a sin against her!... It was all about my pleasure... my excitement... my adventure... the story I could tell 52 years later.... At the expense of my mother’s honor....my parent’s honor...

God says to His people....WHAT HAVE I DONE TO YOU?.... answer me!...

Read 6:4

Do you realize that God says some form of “**I Am the Lord your God who brought you up from the land of Egypt**” 87 times in the Bible?! That was a big deal! And the reason He says it 87 times is because His people forgot!...how could you forget the sea splitting in two!?

2. Prescription

So what’s the prescription?... what’s the cure?... what can God’s people do to save their spiritual lives?... the people want to know... look at verse 6.

Read verse 6

You can tell that these people have been living affluent lives... “*I have a problem with God?...I’ll get out my check book!*”...*I’ll fill the offering box!*

Read verse 7

What’s it going to take Lord?...you want some Kobe beef?... 1000 of my lambs?... a few oil wells?...how about I give you my first born?

God basically says “*No!...Your sacrifices are meaningless!*”... here’s what I want...underline this!

Read verse 8

Three things I want out of your life... I want you to practice justice...love mercy... walk humbly with Me....that’s what I want!....and that’s what He wants from us as well....

1. Practice justice—don’t take advantage of others... don’t mistreat others... deal with others honestly... don’t be after your interest, but be after the interest of others as well....

2. Love mercy—God has been merciful to you ... you be merciful like that to others....“**Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy**” (Matthew 5:7).... To be merciful is to show forgiveness and compassion to those in need.

3. Walk humbly with your God—know your place with God... don’t let your position, your wealth, your status elevate you... know that whatever you have, you have because He let you have it...**God resists the proud but he gives grace to the humble...**

“Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend.” – John R.W. Stott

Three parts to the prescription...whether you embrace these...or reject these will determine your prognosis... [not that our salvation is works by any means...but if we are truly saved our lives will be evidenced by ...1,2,3]

3. Prognosis

We won’t look at chapter 4... but that is truly a wonderful passage... looking forward...to the last days when God’s kingdom will be in place... read it and study it!

But here is something really beautiful...all this leads up to one of the truly great promises in the Bible...it begins in Micah 7... after all the judgment...the diagnosis... the prescription... comes a wonderful prognosis... it begins with who God is...

Micah says (7) **But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord...** I think that is our cue to join him... I think we are to live all of our lives expectantly for the Lord... he says **“I will wait for the Lord of my salvation...”**

“I dwell in darkness”... here’s where we all are living right now.... We dwell in darkness... that is we all are living in this very dark confused world... but no problem!... **The Lord is a light for me...** the Lord is light in the darkness...

He is the great shepherd of His people (8-10)... He is God over the nations (15-17)... God is sovereign over all.... Micah by the time he’s at verse 18... is full of passion....emotion... wonderment... awe of almighty God.... It is no wonder he breaks out with...

(V18) **Who is a God like You...who pardons iniquity...** who is a God like you who can have Your people spit in Your face and forgive them?...Who is a God like you who can be rejected by Your own... committing adultery with whatever idol strikes their fancy..... and pardons them?
(V.18b) **And passes over the rebellious acts of the remnant of His possession?**

He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love....

Once every year on Rosh Hashanah which means *“Head of the Year”* or the very beginning of the Jewish New Year... this year it is on September 25-27... It is the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, and a day of judgment and coronation of God as king...it leads up to Yom Kippur... just a few days later on October 4th.

Remember Jonah... the prophet we looked at last week... the book Jonah was read on Yom Kippur *The day of atonement*... on the first day of the New Year leading up to that is Rosh Hashanah and the Jews read Micah 7:18-19...

To this day... on that first day of the year... Jews will gather at a stream, river or ocean... someplace with running, moving water... not a lake or a pond... they take a loaf of bread... they break it up in pieces...the bread represents their sins.

Each person throws a chunk of bread into the water...the idea that they are casting their sins away... they would recite Micah 7:18-19

**Who is a God like You, who pardons wrongdoing
And passes over a rebellious act of the remnant of His [a]possession?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights in mercy.
19 He will again take pity on us;
He will trample on our wrong doings.
Yes, You will cast all [b]their sins
Into the depths of the sea.**

God will take all our iniquities... sins... all of our wrongdoings... and He will first trample them under His feet... [you don't want to be trampled under God's feet!]... He tramples them until there is absolutely no remaining breath out of them....

Then He will cast them into the sea... completely "buried"... taken completely out of our sight... never to be seen again!... as Jeremiah 31:34 says... God says "**I will remember their sin no more**".

So the Jews today take their pieces of bread and cast them out into the sea.... This is what they call the *Tashlich*... which means "*You shall cast out*"...

I don't normally do this... but there is a short film I discovered this week listening to Gary Hammrich a pastor in Virginia...only 4:00 min long that illustrates Tashlich well...so sit back... and take it in.

[SHOW CLIP]

The symbolism is wonderful... the idea that God will bury our sins... and they will be as bread cast to sea... out of reach... out of sight... and as far as God is concerned out of mind...but there's something staring in the face of the Jews and they don't see it...

Turn with me to back to Micah 5... of all the passages in Micah... this is the most well-known... we read it often at Christmas.

Read 5:2

Ephrathah is the name of that region in those days...it literally means "fruitful"... this is seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ... and Micah prophesies the exact place of His birth... Bethlehem.... So much we can say just about this insignificant town...

- IT IS INSIGNIFICANT!... in that region 115 towns were named “**with their villages**”...in other words... they were towns without names... and they were more significant than Bethlehem at the time.
- Famous, powerful leaders don’t come from backwoods places like Bethlehem...
- Bethlehem would have been a smack in the eye for the haughty leaders in Jerusalem... important people come from New York, London, Paris...not Bovil!

Now reading that verse... it may sound like it *MIGHT* refer to the coming Messiah Jesus... but how do we know it really is prophetic?

You have to go to the Christmas story...Matthew chapter 2...remember when the wisemen, guided by a star, came from the east to Jerusalem... they needed further directions... the star got them to the city... but now what?...

Matthew 2:4

4 And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the [a]Messiah was to be born.

They ask “*where is the boy... king of the Jews*”... what did they say and do?... they pulled out the scroll of Micah and looked up this verse!...they quote Micah 5:2...

Matthew 2:5-6

5 They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written [a]by [b]the prophet:

**6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah;
For from you will come forth a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.’”**

And that led them to Bethlehem....so the Jewish leaders understood that Micah 5:2 was referring to the Messiah.... And reveals the birthplace.

This verse in Micah tells us something interesting about this coming ruler...the real amazing part of the verse is (2) **His going forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity....** Some of your Bibles say from **being of old, from ancient days....**or **His going forth are from everlasting from the ancient days.**

So this ruler comes from a time that is long ago... how long ago?... from everlasting.... everlasting is literally the idea of “*continuous existence*”... this is the idea of time that cannot be measured... the original Hebrew literally means “*The days beyond the vanishing point*” No ruler has ever come from everlasting!...no ruler has come from **a time before time began....** Except One... Jesus Christ!... Jesus Christ came from the days **BEYOND** the vanishing point!Jesus... being God... steps out of time... there was a beginning of time... Jesus was before that... He

teps into the beginning of time and is the Alpha and the Omega..... the beginning and the end...Now...

Tashlich...as wonderful as that picture is...the idea of casting your sins via bread into the ocean to disappear forever is a great picture... but casting bread in the sea doesn't do it!...in fact... read the passage carefully... we don't cast the sins into the sea... God does!

Micah said 7:19

**He will again have compassion on us
He will subdue our iniquities.
and YOU...GOD...YAHWEH...
will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.**

God does the casting of sins... how does He do that?...through His Son Jesus Christ!

Is doesn't happen without Jesus...one's sins are not forgiven and forgotten by throwing a piece of bread into the ocean!... Sad that the Jews miss the vital part!...Jesus Christ.... Micah foretells that the Messiah will arrive in Bethlehem ... the prophet literally just down the street, Isaiah, foretells that Messiah dying on the cross for our sins....

**3 He was despised and abandoned by men,
A man of [b]great pain and familiar with sickness;
And like one from whom people hide their faces,
He was despised, and we had no regard for Him.**

**4 However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore,
And our pains that He carried;
Yet we ourselves assumed that He had been afflicted,
Struck down by God, and humiliated.**

**5 But He was [c]pierced for our offenses,
He was crushed for our wrongdoings;
The punishment for our [d]well-being was laid upon Him,
And by His wounds we are healed.**

**6 All of us, like sheep, have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the wrongdoing of us all
To [e]fall on Him.**

Jesus is that sea where are sins are cast... He is the sea that carries them away forever!

The diagnosis?... we are all sinners... we are all guilty before God... we have all placed our own idols in front of Him... **the Prescription?**..... Accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior... He died on the cross to satisfy God's rightful judgment and wrath for our sins... all of our wrongdoing fell upon Him....

Prognosis?.... eternity with our God and Savior Jesus Christ!