

Micah 6-7: God's Desire for Man

Introduction

In chapter one, the book of Micah opens with a court scene as God calls witnesses (the earth and the people, 1:1) and speaks of His judgment against the people of Judah. After speaking of blessings that will come with the promised Messiah, the focus now turns back to the days of Micah. The court scene is reintroduced as the Lord introduces His *controversy* with the people, 6:2. The mountains are instructed to hear the controversy as well as the earth. This is in reference to Deuteronomy 4:26 which calls heaven and earth as witnesses to the covenant agreement between God and His people. The children of Israel had violated this covenant and God now begins to lay out His case against them. In this court scene, we may properly envision God as the plaintiff and the Israelites as the defendant. God is going to reveal an unpleasant truth to the children of Israel: they had sinned greatly against Him, from the beginning.

Verse three reveals the deep hurt God experienced because of the betrayal of Israel. God had fulfilled every part of His side of the covenant. He inquired as to the reason behind Israel's falling away. They needed to testify as to their reasoning. God recounts that it was He that brought them out of the land of Egypt and sent Moses and Aaron to guide them through the wilderness. They needed to realize that God had been there for them at every turn. God stirs their memory on the incident with Balaam, who sought to use the power of black magic against the Israelites as they passed through Moab, Numbers 22. God turned the curses of Balaam into blessings. The children of Israel were allowed to pass into the land that was rightfully theirs through the promises made to Abraham, Genesis 12. God wanted the Israelites to recall these events *So that you might know the righteous acts of the Lord*, 6:5.

Verses six through eight contain some important words on what God requires of mankind. In verses six and seven, Micah lists out how the people would respond to the questions in the previous verses. They would approach God with questions.

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?
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? (6.6-7)

The children of Israel had reached a point where their religion consisted nothing more of external acts, and the more external acts the better. God does not want and accept mindless rituals where the heart is not connected to the religious act. God wanted hearts that were looking to Him with humility. He desires a heart that will yield to His way and concepts of righteousness. As one reads verses six and seven, it seems that the people did not recognize the seriousness of their sin. Did they perceive God's ways as being unreasonable? Did He set too high of a standard? Surely their sin was not *that* bad. Micah responds to these questions by saying: *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?* 6:8. God wanted their hearts. If they would give their heart to Him, then it would be seen in their doing justice, loving kindness,

and walking humbly with God. These actions are a natural response of the heart. It is no different under the law of Christ. We must be careful not to lower Christianity down to a mere check list of “do’s” and “don’ts.” To do this is to go down the same road as the Israelites: away from God!

There were going to be consequences for disobeying God

God is now speaking through Micah to Jerusalem (the city). They would be wise to *hear the rod*, 6:9. The rod was a symbol of discipline. They are about to be disciplined by the Lord. Before God lists the consequences, He lists some specific sins the people were guilty of. In verse ten, the houses of the people were full of goods acquired by ill-gotten gain. Many of them employed dishonest business tactics and defrauded honest people. While they may have basked in material prosperity, they had not come by it honestly. Verse eleven takes this point further. The people used *wicked scales and a bag of deceptive weights*. They would use different size scales for different purposes, all with the mind to cheat their customers. We can imagine that the shop and business owners rationalized that their practice was acceptable because they stole in only small amounts. God did not overlook this. How could He and remain just? Verse twelve speaks of violence, dishonesty, and people who could not be trusted under any circumstances.

Because of their great sin, God says that they will be punished. The NASU says God would be *...desolating you because of your sins*, 6:13. God had already been punishing them with the assault and continual squeeze put on them by the Assyrians. By the time Micah’s ministry ends, much of the north of Judah had been absorbed into enemy hands. If they continued to rebel, certain destruction would come upon them. God’s punishment upon them would cause them to be continually hungry. Was this caused by the siege of Sennacherib or something else? The siege seems to be the best view because of the rest of verse fourteen. All their possessions would be taken away. They would be unable to produce enough food to eat, or grapes to produce wine. They would be unable to anoint themselves with oil. Smith writes that “oil was used as a medicine for wounds (Luke 10:34), for cosmetic purposes (Psalm 104:15), and for anointing of priests and kings. In the hot climate oil lubricated the skin and made life tolerable. Anointing of the head of a guest was expected of a host (Luke 7:46).”¹

God says He was going to give up the people and allow them to continue to walk toward their destruction. In verse sixteen, Omri is mentioned. Omri was the father of Ahab and was a very wicked king. He was instrumental in permanently establishing Baal worship in the land—where the practice was conducted openly and without remorse. The members of the southern tribes had fallen for this form of idolatrous worship. For this, God said they would *bear the reproach of My people*, 6:16.

Lament over Judah

As chapter seven opens, Micah enters into a lament. Who is the one lamenting? Is it Micah? Is it Jerusalem as they consider the certain destruction that was mentioned in 6:13-16? Smith feels that this lament could have been Micah “acting as a spokesman for the believing remnant, those who were truly concerned about the direction of their country.”² Both Hailey and Smith lean toward the lament coming from the righteous in Jerusalem who lamented over the lack of righteous people in the land.³ *The godly*

person has perished from the land, And there is no upright person among men, 7:2. At this time, Judean society could be summarized as a group of people who spent their time shedding blood and doing evil. *Concerning evil, both hands do it well, 7:3.* Rampant political corruption had become the norm. Because of this, *your punishment will come, 7:4.* Their society was coming apart at the seams — even those in intimate, family relationships could not trust one another. It was each man for himself. Judah's society was headed nowhere fast, and it was due to their sin. This part of Micah ends on a very sad note.

There is hope

From 7:7 to the end of the book, Micah turns his attention to the faithful remnant. These would look to God, for He was the only One who could help now. These are those who served God out of humility and reverence. Even if Judah and Israel fall (which they did), God promised to deliver them. *Though I fall I will rise; Though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me, 7:8.* Micah speaks that those in the remnant recognize their sin. Even if they are brought down, there is hope for a new future. Those who trampled Israel down will ultimately be trampled. These verses remind us that God is in control of all the nations and uses them to accomplish His purposes. We may often think that God primarily concerned Himself with only Israel and Judah during Old Testament times. These verses teach us that God was aware of what was going on in *all* the nations and used them according to His wishes.

In these verses, Micah is looking forward to a future time—the church age—in which a spiritual kingdom would be established. Persons of every nation, race, and origin would come to God and seek to be part of His kingdom. Those who are in the kingdom will be shepherded by God. They dwell in His kingdom as a unique possession.

The book closes with assurances from God that He would take care of the remnant. Verse eighteen is especially touching: *Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us. . . , 7:18-19a.* God would have ultimate victory and would cast their sin far away from them. These were the promises to those who gave their heart to God. It is the case for us today. God will delight in unchanging love and have compassion upon us if we live *for Him*. What a great comfort to us all!

For Discussion

1. What role did the mountains and the earth play in the court scene of chapter six?

2. Had God *wearied* Judah? Explain.

3. What are some ways God had provided for His people?

4. What are the questions Micah perceived the people would ask? See 6:6-7. Discuss the meaning behind each question.

5. What does God *really* desire out of His people? See 6:6-8.

6. List the sins described in 6:10-12.

7. What would God do to the people because of their sin?

8. Who is lamenting in 7:1-6?

9. Who are those who are filled with hope in 7:8-20?

10. What would come of the enemies who oppressed God's people during the days of Micah?

11. Who would be allowed inside the kingdom during the Messianic age?

12. Describe the power of the words in 7:18-19. Was it a certainty that the remnant would be forgiven?

13. How has this lesson helped you to become a better Christian?

(Endnotes)

- 1 Smith, James E. *The Minor Prophets*. p. 350
- 2 Smith, James E. *The Minor Prophets*. p. 353
- 3 Hailey, Homer, E. *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Louisville, KY: Religious Supply, 1993), p. 216