

November 16

Scriptures: Read Micah 1 & 2

Key Verse: “Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?” (Micah 2:7b)

Overview

As do the authors in other prophetic books, Micah declares that his message and visions are from the Lord and are therefore authoritative and true. The Lord God is speaking through Micah against the wickedness of the capital cities of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (Samaria in Israel and Jerusalem in Judah) which has led to the corruption of the whole nation, including the spreading of idolatry. God is pictured as the Supreme Judge, and all the people of the earth are called upon as witnesses. Micah describes the day of the Lord dramatically and graphically. His coming to judge is accompanied by poetic descriptions of earthquakes, volcanoes, flash floods, and possibly tidal waves.

Samaria fell to the Assyrians some 130 years before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Micah firstly prophesies about the destruction of Samaria, for she was guilty of spiritual harlotry. All her gold and silver idols would be melted down as a part of the plunder taken by the idolatrous Assyrians (1:7). The downfall of Israel would cause Micah to be extremely sorrowful, and his mourning would reflect the grief of the Lord (1:8). Another cause for mourning is that Israel's incurable wound (idolatry) has also infected the cities of Judah with her fatal disease, beginning with the city of Lachish; from there it spread to other parts of Judah (1:9, 13).

After the Assyrians took Israel, they entered Judah, took captives, and plundered many cities (cf. 2 Kings 18:13), including the ones Micah chose to name in order to make a play on words based on their meanings. Even his own home town of Moresheth Gath, also known as Mareshah (“inheritance”), would become the inheritance of the king of Assyria (1:15 a), and he would take captives from there. The nobles of Israel would try to escape the Assyrians by fleeing to Judah and taking refuge in Adullam (meaning “refuge”; an area of many caves; cf. 1 Sam. 22:1). But they would be found in their state of mourning, and they too would be taken captive (1:15b-16). The Assyrians also attempted to take Jerusalem but could not get past her gates due to God's intervention (2 Kings 19:1, 19-20, 32-36). Micah asks that the terrible news of the shameful idolatry of Judah and of those taken naked into captivity not be spread to Gath or Beth-Aphrah; these were both heathen cities, and Micah did not want them to bring reproach upon the name of God (1:10).

Chapter two is addressed to both Israel and Judah and gives some of the reasons for their future captivity. The sin of covetousness still persisted (2:1-2). They had not learned from the judgment of Ahab that it was a serious offense against man and God to seize another's rightful property or inheritance (1 Kings 21). Micah is indignant and condemns the oppression of the rich over the poor, just as Amos had done earlier. These oppressors had become as enemies of their own people. Widows and orphans had been thrown out of their homes and their lands confiscated. The garments of the poor had been mercilessly taken to pay off debts (2:8-9). The Lord who is the Defender of the defenceless would not allow this to continue. Micah prophesies that those guilty of such things (which had defiled the land) would no longer walk haughtily but would

have ropes around their necks as they are shamefully led away into captivity (2:3; Lev. 18:24-25). The Lord disowned these wicked ones, saying: “depart, for this is not your rest” (2:10; Deut. 12:9). The Promised Land was intended only for those who served God and lived according to His law. But now the inheritance that Joshua had once divided among the twelve tribes, would be given over to another possessor — the king of Assyria — who would divide up the land as he so desires (2:4-5).

Even though Micah and other prophets of the Lord were speaking the truth, the people did not want to hear them, and thus they tried to restrict the Spirit of God. The true prophets were insulted, called babblers, and persecuted, yet in their righteousness they did not return insult for insult; they were merely declaring the truth about the wickedness of the people and the penalty of their sin. The people, however, were attracted to the false prophets who spoke the words they liked to hear (2:6-7,11). The same is true today. People will rally around those who give consolation, not condemnation. In so doing, people do not seek the whole truth, nor do such “ministers” speak the whole truth. Sin must be exposed and condemned.

After exposing their sin, Micah gives words of consolation and a promise of restoration (2:12-13). These comforting words, however, were applicable only to those who, through faith, had become a part of the remnant of Israel. Such ones had no fear of Micah’s strong but truthful prophecies, since they walked uprightly (2:7b). As is typical of prophetic utterances, Micah’s prophecy leaps forward in time to the final restoration of the saints by the Messiah. Jesus will one day gather His flock, be they Jew or Gentile, and bring them together in unity. He is the “one who breaks” open the way and leads them into His Kingdom, and He is also the .breaker of that middle wall of division between Jews and Gentiles, so that all who believe on Him and enter through Him “have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:13-18; John 10:9).

Prayer

Lord, help us to seek the whole truth and not just a portion, taking it out of context as do false teachers or false prophets. Help us to study to show ourselves approved, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).