

November 18

Scriptures: Read Micah 6 & 7

Key Verse: "... What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

Overview

Chapter six opens with a court scene. The prophet calls the court to order and calls upon the "mountains" and "hills" (often representing cities and towns) to be witnesses in the case of the Lord against His people Israel (6:1-2). God's unanswered interrogation of the accused immediately proves that He had been faithful to the Covenant and illustrates the wrong that the people of Israel had done to Him by being unfaithful. As examples of His faithfulness and righteousness, the Lord mentions a few highlights, such as His freeing them from bondage in Egypt and His giving them Moses who gave them the Law. Also, He gave them Aaron, from whom came the priestly line, and Miriam the prophetess (Ex. 15:20), who represents God's gracious provision of the prophetic office. Other highlights included turning Balaam's curse into a blessing for them (Num 22:5-6; 23:23; 24:10), bringing them into the Promised Land from their encampment at Acacia Grove on the east side of the Jordan (Josh. 3:1; likely mentioned to remind them of their apostasy and God's graciousness, Num. 25:1), and guiding them to Gilgal, the location of their first encampment in the Promised Land (Josh. 4:19).

The people's response shows how ignorant they were of the law of God, for in the writings of Moses and King David, the people could have read that obedience to Him is of primary importance, not sacrifice or even a great number of sacrifices (Deut. 10:12; Ps. 40:6-8; 50:7-14, 23; 51:16-17). They also had ignored the prophets of the Lord who had been telling them the same thing (Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Isa. 1:11-17; 1 Sam. 15:22). God did not merely want their 5:21-24; Isa. 1:11-17; 1 Sam. 15:22). God did not merely want their external ceremonies. What He desired is beautifully expressed in Micah's summation of the moral law: "do justly", "love mercy", and "walk humbly" in obedience and submission to Him (6:8). Because they did not do these things, but rather sinned and rebelled against Him, "the Rod" of His wrath would strike them, make their land desolate, and deprive them of all the blessings He had previously bestowed upon them. As well as charging the upper class people for their dishonest business practices and mistreatment of the poor, he also charges them for continuing in the idolatry of Omri and his son Ahab; these men were the most wicked kings of Israel through whom idolatry also spread into Judah, including the detestable worship of Baal (6:16). Jehoram, a king of Judah, married Ahab's daughter Athaliah, who spread Baal worship in the Southern Kingdom, just as Jezebel, her mother, had in the Northern Kingdom.

In the final chapter of Micah, he voices a lamentation over the death of righteousness in the nation. The godly were like the good cluster of grapes, but now they are all gone. Only the rotting useless grapes remain in the vineyard, so the nation is devoid of moral people and ethical standards. When the relationship with God is severed and there is no longer obedience to Him and His moral laws, the spiritual deterioration also leads to the deterioration of human relationships. Micah expresses that even in the closest of family relationships, the natural bonds and respect for one another disappear because of sin, which callouses the heart (7:5-6). The

people were concerned only with their own good and would step on anyone, or even kill, those who got into their way (7:2b). Micah's description reminds us of how Jesus described what the last days would be like just prior to His Second Coming (Matt. 24:10, 12, 37-38). Micah's description of his own day, before the Lord's judgment came upon them, seems to represent the very last days of this age before our "watchman" (denoting a prophet), the Great Prophet, Priest, and King (Jesus) will come and bring punishment upon the wicked (7:4b). During the days of tribulation, however, the righteous must faithfully endure, trusting their God for deliverance. Although the wicked who persecute the righteous will mock and rejoice over their fall, this will not last for long. The repentant sinners will be vindicated by Jesus their Mediator, who will plead their case and execute justice on behalf of His people. Then the wicked will be put to shame (7:9-10, 16; Ps. 37:1-10; Luke 21:12, 17-19, 36).

Although the land was soon to be desolate because of the people's sins, Micah prophesies that the day will come when Jerusalem's wall would be rebuilt. This would have given them hope for the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the return from the captivity, which was accomplished under Nehemiah (Neh. 2:17). However, the ultimate fulfillment of Micah's prophecy will be the establishment of the Messiah's reign in the new and glorious Jerusalem. At that time, the Messiah's flock will come to Him from all over the world — "from sea to sea" — and they alone (the believers in Jesus) will dwell in the new Israel and enjoy the blessings of the Lord in the land of their inheritance (7:11-12, 14). God's complete fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham will be fully realized at that time (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). Micah's words of encouragement are for believers today who are the Lord's heritage, the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). We have experienced His mercy and compassion, and through Christ's atonement, our sins have been pardoned and cast "into the depths of the sea" (7:19). Reflecting upon God's goodness and mercy causes us, like Micah, to say (making a play on the meaning of his own name), "who is a God like You?" (7:18).

Prayer

Oh Lord, "You are gathering people into "Your Kingdom from all over the world, as they turn and call upon You. You know each of us by name, and we as Your sheep know Your voice. Help us to heed and obey You.