

## VII. *What's What*

15-Jan-06 Micah 6:1-16

*Theme:* True religion consists of loving God and your fellow man, not in man-made acts of devotion.

*Key Verses:* Micah 6:8 <sup>8</sup>He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

### Review

Last week we studied Micah 5:2-15. This passage of Scripture is a bit like a teeter-totter. In the first section, Micah describes the *righteous ruler* that will come to save God's people (vv. 2-5a). In this description of the *mighty Messiah*, Jesus Christ, we find many echoes of the previous chapter of Micah. Jesus Christ is the Ruler who is the better king and judge. Jesus Christ comes forth from the pain and travail of labor and childbirth. Jesus Christ is the Shepherd who feeds the flock of the remnant. Jesus Christ is the global answer, who reigns over all the nations to the ends of the earth. Jesus Christ not only establishes peace, He shall be peace. And finally, Jesus Christ ensures all of these promises forever and ever because He is eternal, He is from everlasting.

At the other end of our seesaw is the *pagan purge* (vv. 10-15). In this passage, Micah describes many of the "other gods" we rely on in place of God's *mighty Messiah*. Whether it is military strength, occultist practices, or idolatry, all of these are attempts to replace the Creator's place in our lives with something He has created. Do we trust in Jesus Christ alone, or in our own strength? Do we look to the Spirit for truth, or do we search in all the wrong places? Do we fill our hearts with the worship of the Father, or do we replace him with things that ultimately cannot satisfy? Sadly, Christians too often do these very things. Thus Micah describes the purge of these pagan things from the Church before announcing punishment on those outside the church.

Finally, the fulcrum or balance point of our teeter-totter is in the middle section (vv. 5b-9), *remnant redemption*. This section describes assures the Church of victory even as it describes its two-fold ministry. On the one hand, we are to be a sweet savor that draws the nations to Christ, the *righteous ruler*. On the other hand, we are to be God's force which denounces sin and wickedness, leading the *pagan purge*.

Ultimately, there are only two destinies that await all of mankind. These are the two ends of the seesaw. Every individual will either abide in the strength of the LORD (v. 4), or they will suffer the vengeance, anger, and fury of God and be cut off from Him forever (vv. 10-15).

### Introduction

Today, we will begin our study of the third and final section of Micah's prophecy. The first section, chapters 1-2, began with judgment against sin and ended with hope of restoration in 2:12-13. The second section, chapters 3-5, started in judgment against sin and then concluded with a large section of current and future hope (chapters 4-5). It should be no surprise that the third section of Micah, chapters 6-7, begins with judgment against sin in chapter 6, but will end on a hopeful note in chapter 7.

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Micah chapter 6 consists of two parts. The first half in verses 1-8 is a *court case* that God brings against wayward Judah. The second half in verses 9-16 shows the *consequences* of *criminal* behavior, as God declares judgment against His people for their sin.

Three traditional forms of literature are included in this chapter. The first section starts out with a “covenant lawsuit” in verses 1-5. This lawsuit merges into what is called an “entrance liturgy” in verses 6-8. In this form, a worshipper asks a series of question regarding entry into the sanctuary and is given an official answer. These two literary styles form a single unit that is united by the repetition of the word **what**. First God asks, **what have I done to you?** (v. 3). Then the people reply, **with what shall I come before the LORD?** (v. 6). Finally, Micah instructs his listeners: **He has shown you, O man, what is good** (v. 8). Taken together, this passage tells us everything we need to know to understand *what’s what*.

The third literary form is in verses 13-16. In response to Judah’s sins (vv. 9-12), God proclaims a series of “covenant curses” upon His people.

### Exposition

#### A. Court Case (6:1-8)

##### 1. Weighty Witnesses (6:1-2)

Micah’s focus switches from the future deliverance of His people to their present sinfulness. He does that by bringing us into a court of law. God is both the Plaintiff and the Judge. He appoints Micah to be His messenger in verse 1: **Arise, plead your case**. Micah is really called to get up (masculine singular) and proclaim God’s case rather than his own. It is God who has a **complaint against His people**; it is God who **will contend against Israel** (v. 2b). Obviously, the people of God are the defendants in this *court case*. That is the standard arrangement in a “covenant lawsuit” in the Bible: God is bringing His case against His people for breaking the terms and conditions of the covenant between them.

This is not the only example of a covenant lawsuit in the Scriptures. Consider:

<sup>1</sup>Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for *the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land*: “There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land” (Hos. 4:1).

<sup>4</sup>He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.... <sup>7</sup>“Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and *I will testify against you*; I am God, your God! (Ps. 50:4, 7).

As *weighty witnesses*, God calls upon the **mountains** and the **strong foundations of the earth** (v. 2a). The mountains and foundations of the earth have been present in all of God’s dealings with mankind since the Creation. Prior puts it this way:

The Lord has decreed that His people should go on trial before the watching world, epitomized in dramatic terms by its oldest inhabitants — the mountains and the hills, who have been silent witnesses to His dealings with people and to their dealings with Him right from the beginning. ... The mountains were there to witness the Lord’s original action in entering into a covenant with His people. Three times the Lord had declared through Moses: ‘I call heaven and earth to witness’:

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<sup>26</sup>*I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed (Dt. 4:26).*

<sup>19</sup>*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live (Dt. 30:19).*

<sup>28</sup>*Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them (Dt. 31:28).*

### 2. What Weariness (6:3-5)

The content of God's complaint is introduced in verse 3: **O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me.** This is the first "what" of the passage. This is a very unusual maneuver in a courtroom setting. Instead of accusing the defendant (Judah), the plaintiff (God) instead asks if any accusations can be made against Him. But the Lord is not the one on trial! God asks, "*What weariness* have I caused that you have grown so cold and distant?" Allen comments:

He is quite ready to hear *evidence against* himself, if such can be procured. Is there something He has done to drive Israel from Him, to encourage apathy and neglect? Has He let them down, or somehow failed to do his part? The questions are broached only to prompt obvious negative replies in the minds of all who hear. Clearly the only disappointment has been on Yahweh's side; Israel has no excuse. The history of Israel is a history of covenant grace.

God then proceeds to describe a litany of His activities that have evidently bored Israel to the point of weariness. The people of God have become so jaded to God's miraculous acts on their behalf that they have forgotten God's goodness to them. Therefore God calls on them to **remember** His salvation acts in verses 4-5. In the Scripture, "to remember" does not simply mean to call into memory; it is a much richer concept. To remember also means to act. When God remembers, He acts:

<sup>1</sup>*Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided (Gen. 8:1).*

<sup>22</sup>*Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb (Gen. 30:22).*

<sup>24</sup>*So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup>And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them (Ex. 2:24-25).*

God never forgets, so when He "remembers," it means He acts. When God remembers Noah in the ark, He sends a wind to dry the earth and rescue Noah. When God remembers Rachel, He heard her prayers, opened her womb, and gave her Joseph. When God heard the groaning of the children of Israel in Egypt, He remembered His covenant and set into motion the events of the Exodus to bring them out of slavery.

Likewise, when God calls His people to remember what He has done, we are to respond in gratitude and thanksgiving. When we forget what God has done, we are tempted to slide into

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rebellion and sin. It is our remembrance of salvation past that spurs us on to live a life of righteousness in conformance with Christ: **that you may know the righteousness of the LORD** (v. 5b). To “know” God’s righteousness is to imitate it in our own lives. Thus, personal righteousness is the goal of remembrance. So, what does God want His people to remember?

First and foremost, He wants them to remember *their salvation*: **For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage** (v. 4a). The Exodus is the great redemption story of the Old Testament. It is analogous to the redemption we receive in Christ through His death and resurrection. Time after time after time the Old Testament writers reminded God’s people of God’s great act of salvation and redemption in the Exodus:

<sup>17</sup>*For the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed (Jos. 24:17).*

<sup>10</sup>*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it (Ps. 81:10).*

<sup>21</sup>*You have brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great terror (Jer. 32:21).*

<sup>1</sup>*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son (Hos. 12:1).*

<sup>10</sup>*Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite (Amos 2:10).*

Just as the people of Israel needed to hear over and over again about the great salvation of the Exodus, we should never tire of hearing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to be constantly reminded of God’s goodness to us to guard our hearts against sin.

Secondly, God wants His people to remember *His provision* for them: **And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam** (v. 4b). Micah’s recitation of God’s provision of leadership echoes the recital of the covenant by both Joshua and Samuel:

<sup>5</sup>*Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagues Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out (Jos. 24:5).*

<sup>6</sup>*Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt” (1 Sam. 12:6).*

Prior points out that in the days of the Exodus, God had “created, chosen, called, and commissioned” leaders with His own authority. They did “not appear out of thin air.” God had provided Moses and Aaron and Miriam at just the right time to lead His people out of Egypt. When God “remembered” the sufferings of His people, He initiated His plan by calling Moses at the burning bush.

Reflecting on the strong leadership of the past puts the present leadership of Micah’s day into perspective. Micah has already described the rulers of Jerusalem as *corrupt cannibals* (3:1-4) and *lousy leaders* (3:9-12). The powerful were more interested in *devious devising* (2:1-2) than in righteous ruling. God had given ancient Israel the leaders it deserved: Moses et al. And God had given the people of Micah’s day the leaders they deserved. It is sobering to think that God

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gives us the leaders that we deserve. May we pray that God be merciful unto us and give us good and godly leaders.

Finally, God wants His people to remember *His protection*: **O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Acacia Grove to Gilgal** (v. 5a). This verse refers to the Balak/Balaam incident of Numbers 22-24 and then to the crossing of the Jordan River. Balak was the king of Moab. He was afraid of the children of Israel, and so he hired the prophet Balaam to curse God's people. However, Balaam was unable to curse the Israelites, and instead pronounced three blessings upon them. It was God's protecting grace that deflected the curses and transformed them into blessings.

Acacia Grove was their final stop on the east side of the Jordan River, and Gilgal was their first camp after crossing into the Promised Land. By mentioning these two locations, God is reminding Israel how He protected them for forty years in the wilderness, guided them safely across the Jordan River, and established them in the Land of Canaan. Every step of the way, God's protecting providence had been with them.

God reminds His people of His salvation, provision, and protection. Far from causing weariness in God's people, these reminders should be the cause of great joy. These are the same things we need to remember to spur us on to live holy lives for Christ.

### 3. Worthless Worship (6:6-7)

After hearing the case for the prosecution, the defendant gets a chance to respond. Boice describes their response:

Verses 6-7 contain four questions asked by the ungodly but religious inhabitants of Jerusalem to the effect that they were more than willing to do anything God might require—if only He would make His wants known. They are arrogant enough to suggest that the fault is not theirs but God's. "Tell us what we haven't done," they say. "We are far more ready to serve you than you are to tell us your requirements."

**With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God?** (v. 6a). This is the second "what" of this passage. Their response is in the form of an "entrance liturgy," which is a series of questions from a worshipper that requires a formal answer. There are several other examples of this literary form in the Old Testament. For example:

<sup>3</sup>Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? <sup>4</sup>He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. <sup>5</sup>He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Ps. 24:3-5; also *cp.* Ps. 15).

<sup>14</sup>... "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" <sup>15</sup>He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil: <sup>16</sup>he will dwell on high; his place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure (Is. 33:14b-16).

The problem with the "entrance liturgy" here in Micah is that it comes from an insincere and ultimately unrepentant heart. The people of Jerusalem are not really interested in *pleasing* God.

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They are much more interested in *purchasing* God. All they need to know is the price. Waltke points out that “Micah’s generation transformed the covenant into a contract.”

First, these hypocritical worshippers offer a *quality* sacrifice: **Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?** The burnt offering was completely dedicated to God; the worshipper retained none of it. Allen points out that “*calves* were eligible for sacrifice from the age of seven days, but yearlings were regarded as the best (*cf.* Lev. 9:3; 22:27). Obviously the older the beast the more had been spent on its upkeep and the greater the economic loss to the worshipper.” In other words, the people of God were asking if God could be bought off to overlook their sins by providing an expensive, high quality offering.

If God was not interested in a high quality sacrifice, perhaps He was more into a high *quantity* sacrifice: **Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil?** (v. 7a). The question is hyperbolic, reaching numerical proportions that far exceed what could ever practically be offered.

Finally, the *ultimate* sacrifice is proposed: **Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?** (v. 7b). Of course, this suggestion is unthinkable, but it shows the depths to which God’s people had fallen, even to consider the pagan practice of child sacrifice. Child sacrifice was expressly forbidden in the law (*cp.* Lev. 18:21). Further, it clearly showed how truly they had forgotten God’s redemptive work on behalf of Israel. It was precisely to prevent the death of the firstborn son that the Passover sacrifice of a lamb had been initiated.

Through this series of questions, the *worthless worship* of Judah has been exposed. They don’t know what God requires. Instead, they assume that He can be bought for a price. They claim to be a religious people, but the wickedness of their hearts has been revealed. They confess God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him (*cp.* Is. 29:13).

### 4. Wise Walk (6:8)

Micah now responds to the entrance questions by giving a short, catechism answer that is probably the most well known verse in the book of Micah:

<sup>8</sup>He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8).

This is the third and final “what” of the passage. Let us consider the various key words in this verse as we apply it to ourselves. First, the word **good**. Micah uses this word as “shorthand” for all the moral requirements revealed through the covenants. The “good” is not a mystery to God’s people, for **He has shown** it to them many times. Other prophets also used this word “good” to describe God’s righteous requirements:

<sup>3</sup>Israel has rejected the *good*; the enemy will pursue him (Hos. 8:3).

<sup>17</sup>Learn to do *good*; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow (Is. 1:17).

<sup>14</sup>Seek *good* and not evil, that you may live; so the LORD God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. <sup>15</sup>Hate evil, love *good*; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph (Am. 5:14-15).

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Not only has the **good** been **shown** to Israel, it is also a **requirement** of the covenant. God's people had agreed to obey the moral law as a condition of the covenant:

<sup>3</sup>So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "*All the words which the LORD has said we will do*" (Ex. 24:3).

The moral requirements of the covenant are summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17). These should have been well known to God's people. And yet, as we will see in the next section (vv. 9-12), they were busily and happily breaking any number of them. Although they had received the law, they did not "remember" it to act upon it in obedience. Therefore, Micah reminds them again of the basic requirements of the law.

God's requirement here is nothing new. "He is not laying down further religious ordinances. All He asks is what has been asked from the beginning. And it is not ritual or routine! It is the reality, not the form. It is: 1) to act justly; 2) to love mercy; and 3) to walk humbly with God" (Boice).

The first requirement is **to act justly**. This is a commandment oriented toward one's fellow man. Justice had been sorely lacking in Judah. Micah 3 was all about *Judean justice*, which is in fact, no justice at all. This is a requirement to treat one another fairly, without partiality, prejudice, or favor. The more powerful are not to oppress the weaker. Everyone is to be treated according to what they deserve.

The second requirement goes beyond the first: **to love mercy**. It is one thing to treat one another impartially. It is another thing to treat someone better than they deserve! The Hebrew word here is *hesed*, which is often translated as "loving-kindness" in the Bible. This is a quality that God has in superabundance. It describes the divine love of God that is loyal to His people even when they are not faithful to Him. It is grace given to us that we do not deserve. It is this very attribute of God that we must imitate towards others. As Bentley puts it: "He had taken pity upon them time after time when they did not deserve it. Therefore they, in turn, should be merciful to others."

The third requirement is oriented towards God: **to walk humbly**. "Walk" in the Scriptures indicates a lifestyle. Micah is reminding us that our lives should be submitted under God's authority and conformed to the will of God.

The only way we can **act justly** and **love mercy** is if we **walk humbly**. Our attitudes and actions towards our fellow man flow out of our relationship to God. We must first get the vertical relationship correct if we have any hope of getting the horizontal relationships right. Micah has reminded us in a very pithy answer of the entirety of the law. These three requirements summarize the Ten Commandments. They describe what it means to be a Christian. Later, Christ would issue another summary of the Ten Commandments that also encompasses Micah 6:8:

<sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Mt. 22:37-40).

Thus, Micah clearly shows the people of His day what God requires. God does not require outlandish sacrifices and showy religious rituals. God wants us to have a *wise walk*; He is first

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and foremost interested in obedience. “To obey is better than sacrifice” (*cp.* 1 Sam. 15:22). True religion consists of loving God and your fellow man, not in man-made acts of devotion. Waltke reminds us:

The prophet does not reject ritual; he simply reasserts that the moral law has priority over the ceremonial. Christians, like Micah’s contemporaries and the Pharisees of Jesus’ time, are also in danger of substituting monetary gifts and a dead moralism for the radical and continuing repentance that Christ demands.

### B. Criminal Consequences (6:9-16)

In one sense, the courtroom scene fades away and we have a new and separate oracle of Micah in the second half of chapter 6. It could easily have been given at a different time and place than the first half of the chapter. However, it fits in well here, because it describes the sins of Judah and their punishment. In other words, Micah presents us with the *criminal consequences* of the *court case* we have been considering.

#### 1. *Various Vices (6:9-12)*

Verse 9 is difficult to translate, since the original Hebrew appears damaged. The first half of the verse is directed towards the city of Jerusalem: **Listen! The LORD is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom** (v. 9a, NIV). It is the second half of the verse that is uncertain. Many translations have something similar to: **Heed the rod and the One who appointed it** (v. 9b, NIV). If this is the correct translation, it probably refers to the Assyrians as the **rod** of God’s chastening. However, several commentators argue that the phrase would be better translated as: **Hear, O tribe and assembly of the city!** In this case, it is a clear parallel line of announcement to God’s people, extending the call from the city to the entire tribe of Judah. Either way, verse 9 simply introduces the main indictment against God’s people in verses 10-12, where God condemns *various vices* that they practice.

God condemns three major violations of the Ten Commandments, violations that ably illustrate that the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah are not living according to the catechism of verse 8. The first violation is against the Eighth Commandment: **Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with wicked scales, and with the bag of deceitful weights?** (vv. 10-11). God condemns as wicked those who steal up treasure for themselves by cheating others through false business practices. In this, the citizens of Jerusalem show themselves no better than their doomed cousins to the north in Israel, who were guilty of the same sin (*cp.* Amos 8:5). The people of God have no excuse for this practice; it is clearly forbidden in the Law:

<sup>1</sup>You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. ... <sup>35</sup>You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. <sup>36</sup>You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt (Lev. 19:1b, 35-36).

Notice the reason for keeping honest weights and measures: it is the character of God and the redemption He purchased for His people. Why do we need to live in obedience to God? Because He is holy, and He has delivered us from sin in order to be holy as well.

The other two violations Micah cites are against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments: **For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth** (v. 12). These rich robber barons of Jerusalem have not only unjustly stolen

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their wealth, they have maintained their position through violence and deceit. Although they have tried to cover up their actions from their fellow men, God is not mocked. He declares their sinfulness and exposes it to the light of day.

### 2. Covenant Curses (6:13-16)

At the end of this covenant lawsuit, the judgment is pronounced. Fittingly, it is in a series of *covenant curses*. This passage is based on the lists of covenant blessings and curses found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 38. When God made the covenant with Israel, He promised to bless them bountifully if they obeyed His commandments and walked humbly with Him. However, He threatened to unleash curse after curse in a gradually growing crescendo if they failed to keep their end of the covenant. Here in Micah chapter 6, the covenant curses are repeated as the sentence is passed.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins. <sup>14</sup>You shall eat, but not be satisfied; hunger shall be in your midst. You may carry some away, but shall not save them; and what you do rescue I will give over to the sword. <sup>15</sup>You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; and make sweet wine, but not drink wine. <sup>16</sup>For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab's house are done; and you walk in their counsels, that I may make you a desolation, and your inhabitants a hissing. Therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people (Mic. 6:13-16).

Notice the correlation with God's earlier revelation:

<sup>16</sup>I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it (Lev. 26:16).

<sup>33</sup>A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. <sup>34</sup>So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see. <sup>35</sup>The LORD will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head. <sup>36</sup>The LORD will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods—wood and stone. <sup>37</sup>And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you. <sup>38</sup>You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. <sup>39</sup>You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. <sup>40</sup>You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off (Dt. 28:33-40).

James Boice points out several emphases in this judgment.

*First*, it is gradual. God says, "I have begun to destroy you," that is, He was not doing it all at once. *Second*, it is expressed in frustration. The people will eat but not be satisfied, store up but save nothing, plant but not harvest. *Third*, it will result in derision and scorn of the once favored nation by other peoples.

Why does God declare all these things will come to pass? **Because of your sins** (v. 13b). We've already seen a catalogue of *various vices* in vv. 10-12. However, Micah gives us one

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more; he saves the most heinous and outrageous for last: **For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab's house are done; and you walk in their counsels** (v. 16a).

The house of Omri and his son Ahab were proverbial in Israel for their wickedness. Waltke writes: “the sins of infamous *Omri* and *Ahab*, who lived more than a century before Micah, have become legendary and serve as a paradigm of apostasy (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 16:30-33), turpitude, cupidity, and injustice (*cf.* 1 Kgs. 21).”

<sup>25</sup>Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all who were before him (1 Kgs. 16:25).

<sup>33</sup>Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him (1 Kgs. 16:33b).

If you thought Omri was bad, Ahab was even worse. Ahab married Jezebel, and she brought the worship of Baal into the land and institutionalized it. It was the life work of the prophet Elijah to confront the Baal worship in the northern kingdom of Israel. Ahab was also well known for his murder of Naboth and the theft of his vineyard (1 Kgs. 21), actions consistent with those already condemned here by Micah in this passage (vv. 10-12).

The final condemnation then, is against idolatry, violations of the first four Commandments. This idolatry is engrained in the people; it is not just a causal flirtation. They **walk in the counsels** of Omri and Ahab, rather than walking humbly with God (*cp.* v. 8). And as a result of their lifestyle decision, God has also made His decision: **I will make you a desolation, and your inhabitants a hissing. Therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people** (v. 16b).

### Conclusion

There are two paths to choose, two roads on which you may walk. The first one is the path of self-sufficiency, the road of “I’ll do it my way.” Passing through this broad gate is the way to destruction (*cp.* Mt. 7:13). It is the way of desolation and reproach. Thankfully, there is another way. Jesus Christ came to earth to bear the reproach of His people so we would not have to. Jesus Christ suffered the desolation that comes from separation from God. He was the object of derision and hissing, of scorn and shame. Jesus Christ bore the reproach of His people on the cross once and for all. If you trust in Christ for salvation, God will never say to you, “You will bear reproach for your sins.” It has already been dealt with.

Christian, what is your response to the gospel? How should we then live? How can we please the Lord God our Savior? Listen to the words of Micah. Memorize them like you would a catechism. And then put them into practice:

<sup>8</sup>He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8).

Next week: Lesson 8 – Great God – Micah 7:1-20

Close in Prayer.