

THOSE WEIRD LITTLE BOOKS: MICAH

'No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God'

Before we get into Micah and what God is saying to us today, let's have a look at these little books and the prophets in general, cos if you are like me, they are not books I look at much at all (apart from reading Isaiah for the spiritual challenge last month)

The prophets are actually the biggest section in the Bible – 4 major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel), 12 minor – only called that as they are short – not less important – written between 760 and 460 BC – over a space of 3 centuries.

The prophets did announce the future, but it is usually the immediate future of Israel, Judah and the nations surrounding them, rather than our future.

The prophets were Spokespersons – they were to speak for God to their own peoples. There were 100's of prophets but only 16 of their messages were written down and put into books that we have today.

We do not know much about them in terms of their lives, but we hear from God via what they say in these books.

Why was there such a lot of prophecy in that narrow time frame of 300yrs? This was a pretty ugly time in Israel's history.

- There was massive political, military, economic and social upheaval.
- A huge level of religious unfaithfulness and abandoning the covenant of Moses.
- Shifts in population and national boundaries

Israel (Ephraim) and Judah had split into north and south.

The north was totally evil, and God had said they will be destroyed – Amos (760) and Hosea (755) predicted the destruction which happened when the north fell to Assyria (722)

Then Judah – the south – increased in its sinfulness – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah all predicted its fall, which happened in 587 bc

Then Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi all announced God's plan for the restoration of His people (they came back from exile in 538bc,) the nation was rebuilt and they returned to God's right ways.

The function of the prophets?

They were covenant law enforcers: Israel's law was a covenant and Deut 4 and 28-32 are filled with the laws that

God gave to Israel for living. (eg back to when I preached on the bleeding woman, and then the rich ruler - laws around the selling of property)

God just doesn't give a law – he enforces it. And that's where the prophets come in – God announces the enforcement – positive or negative thru the prophets so that God's people will clearly understand the events of a blessing or curse.

6 general categories of corporate blessings for covenant faithfulness– life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect, safety

10 Corporate punishments - death, disease, drought, dearth (lack of), danger, destruction, defeat, deportation, destitution, disgrace

Nothing of what they spoke was very new – it was essentially the same message that God delivered thru Moses in Lev and Deut, the laws and covenants that the Israelites were bought up with, that they knew by heart, that they recited and learnt between God and his people. 10 commandments followed by Lev 26

In the books of the prophets this is the general pattern

1. An identification of Israel's sin OR of God's love for her
2. A prediction of curse or blessing depending on the circumstances.

Micah deals with God's coming judgment on Israel, but also shows God's promise to be merciful and restore his people

1-2 – accusations and descriptions of 500 yrs of rebellion of Israel against God

He lists all the towns that have been rebellious against God

Why – the leaders have become rich thru theft and greed, 2.2. *They covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them'*

There are prophets who are corrupt and offer promises of protection for anyone who can afford to pay them 2.11

3-4a more lists of leaders and prophets who have committed injustice – running the country on bribery, twisting justice to favour the rich, and the poor are being deprived of land which was their security and their hope. All of this is a breaking of the covenant laws that God gave to Israel - given to prevent just what is happening. And so disaster is coming and Jerusalem will be destroyed and left in ruins

Both of these 2 dire predictions come with a promise of hope:



1. God is like a shepherd of his people and he will regather and rescue his people and bring them to good pasture and become their king again
2. After the destruction of Jerusalem (which is not permanent) God will raise up His temple, fill it with His presence and fill it with the remnant of his people and all nations will stream to Jerusalem and God becomes the King of all nations.

Chapter 4-5 adds to the previous messages of hope and restoration.

Israel will return from exile in Babylon, in the new Jerusalem a messianic king from the line of David will come , who will be born in Bethlehem and rule in Jerusalem and over the restored people of God. (and who we know is the prediction of Jesus coming)

Gods kingdom will confront evil and bless the nations.

6-7 – again returns to the pattern of warning followed by hope

Micahs famous words of what it means for Israel to follow God

‘No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God’

This is what Israel has not been doing and so it will come to ruin

But a final message of hope in chapter 7: Why should God listen to this faithless and rebellious people?

2 reasons : First – because of **Gods character** 7.18 *Who is a God like you, who forgives sin and pardons rebellion?*

Second: because of **Gods promises** 7.20 *you will stay true to Jacob and show covenant love to Abraham as you swore long ago*

But to become a blessing to the nations Israel must first be faithful to their God

If God is going to bless the nations thru Israel, then he must confront the evil among his people.

But his judgment is what leads to hope, because God’s love and promises are more powerful than human evil and Gods ultimate purpose is not to destroy but to save and redeem.

So let's look at the most well known verse from Micah 6.8

What does this mean and does it apply to us here and now? ‘

Just before this Judah is asking what sacrifices God requires for their sins- what will God be happy with? burnt offerings, 1000's of rams, 10000 rivers of oil, their firstborn?? If they can just offer up these things to God then he will be merciful to them?

It's little wonder there is a ‘No’ from God

God doesn't want those external sacrifices from His unfaithful people who have been breaking His Law - this is what he wants them to do *Do what is right (to act justly) - to act righteously in every circumstances. for Gods people this wasn't something new - his commandments and instructions are all about right social relationships between people based on Gods view of what is appropriate and right. This meant protection for orphans, widows, the poor , slaves, and foreigners. It's not ok to take things that belong to others or to cheat people out of what is theirs so that we come out on top. Pushing someone aside to get to the biggest bit, ripping off an employee , ripping off your employer in time , saying we will do something then going back on our word

*Love mercy - kindness to people around us. Jesus summed this up in ‘Love the lord your God....love your neighbour as yourself’ The words behind me. God shows us kindness/mercy every day - we don't get what we deserve from Him - and yet it so easy to be mean to family , friends, neighbours

*Walk humbly with God - He is God and we are not. His ways are right and ours, when we deviate, are wrong. His ways are higher than our ways. It's a daily walk with God , submitting to Him and doing what is right as we follow His ways. Jesus is our example - walking in total humbleness as he followed the path that his Father had for him- the path that led to his death for my, and your sins

As Grant Northworthy spoke a few weeks back - on what true worship/worship looks like - what real sacrifice is - God isn't about the stuff I do - how many times I help out at youth grp (tho Im hoping there is a special reward in heaven for that) or how much I give, or if I raise my hands when I sing - none of these are wrong , but if that is my outward appearance, and my heart is wrong - if Im unkind or mean, if I have unforgiveness towards someone, when i deliberately don't follow the promptings of Holy Spirit, then I am not doing what God require of me.

And that's not where I want to be

Where do you want to be today?

- Is this a fresh look at Micah 6.8?
- How do we do what is right (or just) ?
- What does modern day justice look like as a follower of Jesus?
- How do we love mercy in a world that wants revenge and payback?
- What does walking humbly look like for you?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS