

Sunday School Lesson - March 22 Micah Chapter 3 and Micah 6:6-8

Good morning and I hope you are well and blessed. I hope that this correspondence finds you well and in good spirits. Let us not forget to review Sunday school lessons.

Please, take a few minutes and read 2 Chronicles 7:12-14 “Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land”.

At this time let's go to God with our prayer requests: give praise honor and glory to God for blessing and providing for us, with our prayer requests for members of our church, family and community that are ill, suffering, going and through medical treatments, and for God to eradicate the Coronavirus. Pray for those who have lost loved ones through this disease, and pray that God would bring healing to all those who are infected. Pray for the medical community as they continue to care for the sick. Pray for our national, state, and civic leaders that God would give them the wisdom to know what to do as they lead in this anxious time. Ask God to lead us to serve others with love and that God's goals on earth be accomplished as He empowers us. In Jesus name. Amen

Lesson for March 22 from Micah chapter 3 & 6 – “Corrupt Leaders”

Information regarding the prophet Micah, came from Thru the Bible Commentary by Vernon McGee, Exploring The Minor Prophets by John Phillips and our Adult Bible Lessons, The Present Word.

”The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the Days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.” (Micah 1:1) Micah means “Who is like Jehovah?” The answer of course is that God stands alone.

Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (see Mic. 1:1), who were kings of Judah. His prophecy concerns Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, while Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. Although he was a man from the southern kingdom, a great deal of his prophecy had to do with the northern kingdom. He spoke to the nation during the time that the northern kingdom was being attacked by Assyria. The southern kingdom was attacked also; it was the northern kingdom that actually was carried away into Assyrian captivity.

Micah was a contemporary of three other prophets: Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos. It is possible that he was a friend of Isaiah. Micah and his prophecy has been called that of a miniature Book of Isaiah. There are many similarities between the two. Micah pronounced judgment on the cities of Israel and on Jerusalem in Judah. It was just a day's journey from Micah's hometown to Jerusalem, so he was aware of the sins of the capital as well as the sins of the countryside.

Micah condemned violence, corruption, robbery, covetousness, gross materialism, spiritual bankruptcy, and illicit sex.

Micah is considered a prophet of judgment. In the first three chapters: Who is like unto God in proclaiming—that is, in witnessing? In chapters 4 and 5: Who is like unto God in prophesying, in consoling? In chapter 6: Who is like unto God in pleading? In chapter 7: Who is like unto God in pardoning? The main theme of the book is God's judgment and redemption. One key verse, is Micah 7:18 which says, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy." The people paid no more attention to Jeremiah than they had to Micah, and what Micah had prophesied did happen to Jerusalem exactly as he said it would.

In Micah 3:1, God is speaking through the prophet Micah, directly to the leaders of the Jewish people. "Justice" in this verse is literally being honest and fair in our treatment of others.

Micah 3:5-8 is a harsh indictment against prophets and 3:9-12 is a broader condemnation of the rulers, priests, and prophets who have oppressed the innocent. In verses 5-8, Micah lashes out with a specific attack on prophets who preference the wealthy over the poor. The preferential treatment, according to Micah, typically occurs in the form of delivering messages that please the wealthy and then delivering opposite messages to those who cannot fork out the cash. Micah was saying that the false prophets were as treacherous as serpents. What came out of their mouths was deadly poison.

In verse 8 Micah defends his own ability to speak for God. He says, "But for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin." Then Micah turns again with a call that expresses outrage not only at prophets, but also rulers, priests, and every area of society (verse 9). Rulers are ruling for bribes; priests are teaching for a fee, and prophets are performing their duty for money. While they claim to do these duties in the name of the Lord (verse 11), Micah believes otherwise. They lean upon on the Lord and say, "Is not the Lord among us: and No disaster will come upon us?" Micah declares the whole of Jerusalem is perverted because of their poor leadership, and punishment is coming to everyone by way of God.

Punishment doesn't happen when Micah expects it or how Micah expects it. The Babylonians demolished Jerusalem in the time of Jeremiah, but this destruction was delayed; it wasn't in Micah's time. (see Jeremiah 26:12-19). Jerusalem would be destroyed just as Samaria was. This happened in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar and Babylonian army attacked the city.

All three – rulers, priests, and prophets were to be guided by God's word alone, yet all three, according to Micah, have instead made wealth their guide and goal.

From the lesson text section titled Kindness - The word translated as "kindness" in Micah 6:8 is rendered as "mercy" in other translations of the Bible. That is because the Hebrew word for "kindness," the word *hesed*, is a multifaceted word that is hard to translate into just one English

word. Beside kindness and mercy the word hesed is translated using a number of English words throughout scripture. Most often, especially in the book of Psalms, it is rendered as “steadfast love”. The closest New Testament word to hesed is probably the word charis, which is translated as “grace.” The word hesed sums up many of the attributes of God” love, mercy, grace, steadfastness, and more.

Wicked men can usually find a religion that will accommodate their sins. In Micah’s day false prophets were willing to say whatever their patrons wanted to hear – as long as there was adequate remuneration. Micah was saying that false prophets were as treacherous as serpents. What came out of their mouths was deadly poison.

From section, stepping into the world – The prophet has laid out a clear case against corrupt leaders who have turned away from God’s word. His words went unheeded by many of Israel’s leaders, but what of those who took his message to heart? What could they do to right all the wrongs they had committed? Micah 6 involves an imaginary conversation between the Lord and Israel. In verses 1-5 the Lord introduces His case against the disobedient people of Israel. Verses 6-7 record Israel’s response as a series of questions beginning with, “With what shall I come to the Lord?” (Micah 6:6). Israel’s focus is on their external religious rites, and their questions show a progression from lesser to greater. First, they ask if God would be satisfied with burnt offerings of year-old calves (Micah 6:6b), offerings required in the Law of Moses. Second, they ask if they should bring “thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil” (Micah 6:7a). Third, they ask whether they should offer their firstborn sons as a sacrifice for God. Would that be enough to cover their sin? Would God be pleased with them then?

Verse 8 follows with God’s answer, rooted in the Law of Moses: “He has told you, O man, what is good.” In other words, Israel should already have known the answer to their questions. God then says that He did not need or desire their religious rites, sacrifices, or oblations. Instead, the Lord sought Israel’s justice, mercy, and humility.

God told them what is required in the Torah (first five books in the Bible). Jesus taught that the whole of the Torah can be summed up in two statements: “Love God with all your heart” and “Love you neighbor as yourself”

In Micah words, “Do justly”. Always do unto others what you would want them to do unto you. In every social contract, be fair, good, and honest. “Love mercy”. Remember that the merciful will receive mercy. “Walk humbly with thy God”. Walk as Enoch and Noah did. Do not be proud. Always esteem others better than yourselves.

The message of Micah is still pertinent today. External compliance to rules is not as valuable in God’s eyes as a humble heart that simply does what is right. God’s people today will continue to desire justice, mercy, and humility before the Lord.

See Psalm 146.

Closing: For the love that cast out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen

God we ask that you watch over us and take care of us.

Next week Sunday school lesson is from Malachi chapter 2 and chapter 3:5-6