

PUBLIC TRUST BETRAYED / Sunday, July 12, 2015

Unifying Topic: **NO TOLERANCE FOR CORRUPT LEADERS AND PROPHETS**

Lesson Text

I. **No visions** (Micah 3:5-8)

II. **Exchanging Justice for Wealth** (Micah 3:9-12)

The Main Thought: But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin (Micah 3:8, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Some leaders are corrupt, lie to the people they are charged to protect, and then find associates who will support their evil ways. What can be done to end this dishonesty? God will judge and punish corrupt leaders and prophets.

Lesson Aim: To explore how Micah confronted corrupt leaders.

Life Aim: To address corruptions in leadership within the church and the broader community.

HISTORY:

Chapter 2:5-11 The rulers had robbed the people of clothing; the widows forced from their homes, and stripped their children of their God-given right. The rulers had taken the children's happiness, as well as the widows. Since the Israelites had committed such grievous sins, Canaan was no longer their resting place. God would take the land from them; their inheritance because it was now polluted and it would destroy them; the land would vomit them out (v.8-10). The sort of prophet the people wanted was not someone like Micah who told the truth, but who comes with lies; acting on impulse, prophesying lies and of wine and strong drink (v.11).

Chapter 3:1 And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?— This message opens with a call to hear the Lord. The heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel are those leaders in both the northern and southern kingdoms who were particularly charged with the upholding of justice in the land. They of all men were the ones who were to know justice; protect the innocent and punish the guilty. They were to uphold the righteousness in the land.

3:2 Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;— Instead of hating the evil and loving the good, they violated their trust and persecuted the very ones that they were supposed to protect. ¹The design of the expressions is to show what rigorous, cruelty, and oppressions, these rulers exercised on the people. By their heavy taxes and levies, and exorbitant penalties and fines, pillaged and plundered them of all they had in the world, and left them quite bare, portrayed as bones stripped of their skin and flesh.

3:3 Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. The idea of the last verse is repeated here with more emphasis. Their pursuit of the ones they were supposed to protect was so merciless and barbarous that it is portrayed in language that fits in the crudest of terms the butchery and eating of animals. So addicted are they to their pursuit of evil and persecution of the helpless and innocent that only the judgment of God can bring them to their senses. The poor, innocent and righteous are always the object of God's love. And to do violence to them is to arouse the anger of God.

3:4 Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. Crying out to the Lord really didn't matter because He did not hear them. The leaders treated the people miserably in order to satisfy their own desires, and then had the gall to ask for God's help when they found themselves in trouble. God's anger will fall; judgment will overtake those to whom judgment had been entrusted and violated their trust. Jehovah will hide His face from them, even as they have hidden their faces from those who they were to protect.

¹<http://biblehub.com/micah/3-2.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

LESSON:

Micah 3:5-8 No Visions

3:5 Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. This verse concerns the prophets who enjoy the popularity of the people. But do not have the authority of God behind them. They are false prophets who cause the people to err; cry peace when they have food to sink their teeth into, but declare war against the one who puts nothing in their mouths. If the customary bribes are withheld, these prophets announce war and calamity as inevitable. These people, like the rulers in 2:1-4, have violated the integrity of the office. They speak to please the people and even to console the rulers in their sin. God has said that judgment will come (v.4), but these prophets say there shall be only peace.

3:6 Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. God sends a message, "*you shall live in the dark, far from the sun, and the day shall be dark for them.*" This is a picture of the worst thing that could happen to a prophet, to have no message to give. This is what will happen to these false prophets. They will seek to have a vision and to communicate some kind of an authoritative, authentic message, but none will come.

3:7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God. The true nature of these seers and diviners will be discovered and be made ashamed and confounded. In their own self-interests and self-preservation, they do give forth a false message that does not in fact come to pass; not true. The God they claim to represent will in fact give no answer to them. They will in turn cover their lips, for they will be put to shame; total embarrassment.

Micah 3:9-12 Exchanging Justice For Wealth

3:8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Here, Micah sets himself forth as the true prophet of God, in contrast to all the false prophets. The false prophets and diviners could get no answers from God because they had no fellowship with Him. However, Micah is full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might. He had already declared unto Jacob and Israel (v.1) that they shall know judgment. Here, Micah speaks of their transgression and sin, not about peace. The true prophet of God, strengthened by God's Spirit can objectively and authoritatively proclaim not only the sin of the people, but also God's judgment. Having God to back him up, he will declare boldly and accurately the sins of both the norther and southern kingdoms.

3:9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. Micah wants the heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel to hear what the Lord has to say. They weren't really looking for judgment, they abhorred judgment. They hated and detested justice. They love to corrupt and pervert fairness and justice.

3:10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. Instead, the rulers and princes have violated their sacred trust (vv.1-3). The great palaces built up Zion with money gained by extortion, rape, and judicial murders—bloodshed, and Jerusalem was built with wickedness; gained by unlawful means. They had made the nation great by making its citizens miserable, with the result that the nation is filled with sin instead of righteousness.

3:11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. The leaders deal out judgment for a bribe; personal use; they take rewards. The priests take financial gain; take payment to teach which was expressly forbidden by Moses (Exo.23:8, Deut.16:19). The prophets get silver for

reading the future; performed their function for financial gain, which in and of itself was evidence of the fact that they were false. Yet, in all of this, they claimed they were doing the Will of the Lord; leaning on the Lord, and that no evil can come upon them, for they claim God was among them. The tragedy is that the activity of rulers, priests, and prophets alike was carried out under the guise of religious activity. They leaned on the Lord and boasted of His presence among them. They made the fatal mistake of mistaking God's favor for favoritism.

3:12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. The city Zion that they so carefully built up will be utterly destroyed. It will plowed up like the fields. And Jerusalem will become rubble, heaps; rock piles. The mountain of the house in which the city sits will become desolate. This prophecy was fulfilled and the lamentation over the desolate city is recorded in the book of Lamentations.

SUMMARY:

²The false prophets were like vicious animals or like serpents with forked tongues and fangs that would poison (v.5). Their messages were geared to the favors they received (v.6). Micah prophesied that one day the false prophets would be shamed by their actions (v.7).

He attributed the power of his ministry to the Spirit of the Lord (v.8). Up to now Micah has been speaking to the northern kingdom of Israel but now he turns specifically to Jerusalem (v.9). He accuses the leaders of making cruelty and murder a way of life in Jerusalem (v.10). Micah severely condemned religious leaders who ministered only if they get paid for it (v.11). The judges were judging for reward; the priests were teaching for hire; and the prophets were prophesying for money. This is Micah's message to them and to us. This is a prediction that for their sins there will be a complete desolation of the city of Jerusalem (v.12).