

# **Corruption in high places      Micah 3:1-12 or Don't mess with God**

## Introduction

Chapter 3 is the beginning of the second message. In chapter 3 Micah again rebukes the leaders of the nation for their sinful conduct which God would ultimately judge.

In chapter 4 he outlines the promised kingdom that God will bring about.

Such a glorious future should have motivated the leaders to turn from sin and obey God. But they didn't even listen to the sermon.

## Down with the dishonest      3:1-4

Whenever we watch the news on TV our hearts respond within us - in cries of pity or for punishment. Take Kosovo for example, pity for the refugees and a desire for those responsible to be stopped and punished.

Micah opens his message with a call for people to listen. Listen God is speaking! This is important, or as Jesus said so often. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

God is concerned for the poor and right dealings. But the rich and powerful control the courts and pleas for justice are ignored.

"Should you not know justice" in verse 1 means more than just enforcing the law. God's law made provision for almost every contingency, activity and emergency. The law enforcers were responsible for protecting the weak and vulnerable in the community and sympathising with them in their distress. But the poor did not even get cold enforced law keeping, let alone justice!

The civil authorities were not only permitting the actions of the wealthy to exploit the poor, they were joining in themselves. God says they "hate good and love evil" v 2

It should not have been that way.

(Jethro, Moses Father in law, suggesting the appointment of judges) Exodus 18:21 "Select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain -and appoint them as officials."

Rather than being protective shepherds to the people, they behaved like ravenous beasts.

They had been warned before.

Proverbs 21:13 "He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself cry out and not be heard"

Again Micah warns them that God will in the same way ignore the rich and powerful when they cry out for help and justice when distress comes upon them.

When darkness came they would cry out to God, but he would not answer. Those who hate good and love evil, would turn to God as if they had done nothing wrong & expect Him to help them !

### The wages of sin 3:5-12

When God is left out of human government it's easy for officials to use their authority selfishly to exploit the people.

In the 80's only 1 councillor was not known to be corrupt over 3 county councils. (Betty)

A nation depends on those who uphold the law.

Peter Bobbins who stood as a candidate in the recent Welsh assembly elections campaigned for prayers in the new assembly. It was so novel and controversial he was interviewed by national newspapers like the Guardian.

In Micah's day the judges, the priests and the prophets had been bought off for a price. They loved the financial rewards of popularity, the thrill of exercising a public ministry and the adulation of many followers.

The lies of false prophets made it easy for corrupt officials to carry on their evil deeds.

The nation was in moral darkness.

Micah has spoken of the ruin of Samaria, here he speaks of the might of Jerusalem, reduced to a ploughed field and pile of rubble. This would take time, about 130 years, and Jeremiah would see it. (Jer 26:8) How patient God is.

2 Peter 3:8-9 (Not wanting anyone to perish)

The true prophet - Micah, is described in verse 8 "filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might ... to declare sin."

Next week is Pentecost Sunday !!!! And as a church we shall be crying but to God with those familiar words - Again, again.

Where are the Micah's today ?

So many real men of God loose their positions in churches because they are deemed to be rocking the boat, disturbing the status quo.

A lady left one of my churches and I later heard though gossip, why. She said of me "He made me feel as if I was a sinner" - I've gone to another church where that doesn't happen to me any more.

A deacon once suggested that he should leave a service feeling good, with the tune of a familiar hymn in his mind.

I've never been good at giving people what they want !

I know of a Liverpool Pastor (Geoff Mavers) who had to be careful what he said. A deacon would get out a pound note at the beginning of the sermon for the collection during the last hymn (old story) and every time he hears something he does not like, he changes it, 50p, 20p, 10p to nothing. After the service the deacons decide if they liked the sermon, or felt got at, and if the latter docked a sum from the man's wages. This man was a minister in a denominational church with a young family, left hung out to dry. What was he to do? Eventually he got a move to another church.

Even in the church "He who pays the piper thinks he can call the tune"

I don't think Micah would have been a good denominational man either.

Yesterday or today ?

These corrupt, evil, "murdering thieves claimed to be serving God ! (The one's of Micah's day of course!)

"Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us." they said, (verse 11). We are depending on the Lord.

It was what most of the prophets and priests were saying. But money was talking louder than God.

When religious leadership is in the hands of those with political and financial clout, truth and justice go out of the window. They would get an 'A' grade in hypocrisy.

Just like the fake Christians in Titus's day. (Titus 1:10-16)

Just like today !

I have heard badly taught Christians say - I'm saved, God has chosen me, I can't not go to heaven, so it doesn't matter how I live, God will always forgive me. Calvin would turn in his grave if he heard his teaching so distorted, only he isn't there - he's in paradise with his Lord.

Biblical theology does not ever excuse sin.

The condemnation of Micah was not for unbelievers but is a word of rebuke for the Pastors, Bishops, Arch Bishops, Bible colleges, denominational offices for their silence in condemning sin amongst those in positions of authority.

### Conclusion

We need to remember our leaders, in prayer. Remember Power corrupts is not a fact of life, but it is a common observation. It is no good blaming "the system" because the system is made up of people, individuals who are responsible for their own actions.

Let us beware of criticising others for sins we are unable to commit. The rich were not more sinful; they just had more power in terms of wealth and position to do so.

God eventually gets tired of our playing games with him. If we are not prepared to listen to him and do what he says. He will eventually call it a day.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" Heb 11:6

They had their religious clichés "Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us" Like a heathen mantra

Jesus said, "Do not be like the hypocrites but ... when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words" Matt 6:5-7

The result of the sins of the prophets and leaders of the people was the destruction of their beautiful temple and city, with thousands of his people being taken into exile.

The destruction of Jerusalem as prophesied by Micah is a reminder that when God says "Be holy, for I am holy." He really means it!

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