

God's requirements Micah 6:1-16

Cycle 1 Chapters 1 & 2 Warning
Cycle 2 Chapters 3 - 5 Promise
Cycle 3 Chapters 7 & 8 Challenge
a/c Wiersbe

Introductory summary

Micah begins with a passionate plea to the people from the heart of God (1-5). He then responds to God's pleading with a clear statement of the proper way for men to behave (6-8), before again attacking the corruption of the city. (9-16)

Remembrance 1-5

The usual opening LISTEN Pay attention. God is speaking.

Here is the indictment in another courtroom drama, with creation as the jury. God's dealing with his people will not be done in secret but out in the open for all to see. Echo's of the past are here, for three times the Lord had declared through Moses, "I call heaven and earth to witness" Each time it was against his covenant breaking people. (Deut 4:26; 30:19; 31:28 - a similar style in Ps 50)

We condemn the sin in Kosovo, as we did in South Africa, in Iran under Komeni, Iraq under Saddam Hussain.

But the prophet of God uses a mirror, not a telescope.

"The Lord has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel." 2b

When judgement comes eventually upon this nation, it will fall on the church first. It has failed to be salt and light in the world.

Worse it has peddled dung as a fragrant offering to the people.

Syncretistic worship, God's mercy and grace

1984 York Minster Enthronement of

1992 Windsor Castle, chapel The defender of the faith didn't

God had been loyal to and blessed Israel, and what had been their response?

Measured against the goodness and faithfulness of God - they had failed.

God's saving acts though the generations had been manifest for all to see. The whole world sits up and takes notice when God acts, e.g. [Joshua 2:9-11](#)

Remember

1 Delivery from Egypt and the appointment of God given leaders in Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

2 Balak and Balaam (Num 22- 24:10 ff; Deut 23:5 Neh 13:2) When God turned cursing into blessing.

What God could do to Balak's Moabites, he can do to Assyria. Will you believe, says God, that I can deliver you again ?

Balak and Balaam

Balak was king in Moab, and had seen or heard what God did in bringing out Israel under Moses from Egypt and their victories over powerful tribes like the mighty Amorites.

So they sent for Balaam, a prophet. [Num 22:5-6](#)

Some of the Moabite elders took money to him, the set fee for such a service. He gave them hospitality and sought God's will on the matter.

God said "You must not put a curse on these people, because they are blessed" 22:12

So Balaam refused the job and sent them home.

Balak was a desperate man. He sent other princes, more numerous and distinguished to try a second time. Also, Balak was offering more money for his services.

Balaam knew that God did not want him to take the job, and said so, but thought he would ask God again, in case-he had changed his mind - after all the money he was no being offered would come in very handy !

God said that he knew the answer before he asked, but he could go with them (the implication being, if he was that stupid). Balaam looked for any loophole to keep in sight of the money he was being offered. Greedy for money, he desperately wanted to change God's mind.

Three times his donkey would not go where he wanted he to and he beat her. Eventually, [Num 22:28-35](#)

When he got to the king, the king said, What kept you?

You know I can offer you more than enough for your services.

Balaam warned him that he dare not defy God, and so the game went on.

First attempt ends with Balak saying "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!" 23:11

Second attempt goes no better, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he not speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?" 23:19

Balak is getting desperate and tries a third time to get Balaam to curse Israel. But after the third attempt he says "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times." 24:10 And he sent him home, and did not pay him a penny!

3 Shittim to Gilgal Crossing of the Jordan under Joshua (Joshua 3 & 4) The God who opened up the red sea to deliver his people, did so again so that they could enter and take the promised land. God had shown his commitment to his people.

Remember my salvation. You live in Jerusalem -my gift to you. Faith was not abstract. It was in concrete form, but they chose to be blind to the obvious.

God says remember (Communion). They were specifically instructed in the law to teach children to remember the past blessings of God (Deut 4:9; 6:7; 11:18-19)

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" Santayana in Wiersbe 109

Forget God's mercies and you'll ignore his commands.

It is as if God cries - How have I burdened you (3) Are you tired of me, do I bore you. Is it really so much of an effort to give me any time or affection ? What have I done or failed to do that brings us to this point ? Apathetic contemptuous silence is the response; as God cries out for an answer.

God's people were bored - with the mechanics and routine of so called worship. It was a wearisome chore, so they often defaulted in observing their obligations. Life was more interesting and stimulating. In short they didn't need God.

The cultic religions of Canaan had their food offerings and sacrifices.

Jewish religion had done its bit

Abraham offering Isaac

Solomon 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep on one occasion (1 Kings 8:62 f)

Evil kings Ahaz and Manasseh their sons (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6)

You can almost hear the people and their courtroom response.

What sacrifices are sufficient to keep God at bay? So similar to the ticket to heaven Christianity.

They kept upping their bid, but God would not be bought off. His opening bid is for repentance.

Penance without repentance is useless.

"To obey is better than sacrifice." 1 Sam 15:22

"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it, you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken & contrite heart." Ps 51:16-17

Sacrifices were ordained by God so that worship could be valued, not to buy off God.

All forms of Christianity, high or low, are pointless without clean hands and pure hearts. Too easily

religion becomes a substitute for righteousness. A veneer of religious activity.

It was Israel's job to be a blessing to the world (Abrahamic promise Genesis 12:1-3) also Isaiah 42:6 "I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles."

It was important that they kept not only the letter of the law but the spirit of the law, not only for their own sakes, but for that of the whole world.

The levels of pollution they allowed, that is sin, made them less than perfect, less able to do the work God called them to do - to function (See Sermon on the mount Matt 5:48)

So What did the law require: Justice

My mother taught that Obedience was heaven's first law. And justice was the first requirement of the covenant law. It was the beginning of the end for Israel when it was denied (1 Kings 12:12-16)

So What did the law require : Love hesed

So What did the law require : Walk humbly with your God

Not ahead, or behind, but with and consciously dependent on. This is simple faith, it does not require great demonstrative displays and many public sacrifices.

These thoughts echoed in

Deut 10:12-3 "What does the Lord your God ask of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees."

Is 56:1 "Maintain justice, and do what is right."

Hos 12:6 "Return to your God; maintain love (hesed) and justice, and wait for your God always."

Zech 7:9-10 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'"

1 Peter 3:15 (give an answer for the hope you have)

He has shown you O man what is good. The word Man is Adam. Remember the frequent use of good and very good in the creation accounts. And this Adam, as all men, turned his back on God the provider and definer of all that is good.

God wants - justice, hesed, and for his people to walk humbly with Him.

God is not abstract 9-16

Verse 9 The refrain LISTEN. Again, again.

Specific failings listed again

Ruthless corruption in business, the greed, exploitation, fraud and murder. The violence of the rich meant breaking and abhorring the covenant relationship of justice, and certainly they had no thought of hesed for their victims. Lies and corruption was rife in the legal system designed by God to protect the poor and the weak. The business high flyers were sharks, the political and legal leaders were out for themselves, the religious hierarchy was a joke. Mammon, money is really their God no matter what lies they utter in empty rituals in the temple week by week.

God's punishment

Food - but never enough

To loose stored treasure

Poor crops

(All an echo of the curses brought on themselves Deut 28:15 ff)

Leading to the collapse of the economic system

Rampant inflation. Savings will be eroded, and what little remains swallowed up by the military machine.

Supermarket fear "Have I got enough money to pay for all this ?"

Omri & Ahab "did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before them." (1 Kings 16:25-33) Hitler's of their day. Evil kings of God's people. Ruthless brutality in pursuit of profit, and even

worse they openly worshipped other gods. But they were kings of the North, Samaritans, not the pure south ! How could they be compared with such evil?

Simple, they had adopted their (lack) of business ethics, rejected the worship of God, and enjoyed the pagan worship with all its sexual promiscuity and similar abominations. They sought peace and security from any source, but the right one, from the lord God who is the prince of peace.

St Pierre, Martinique 1902 – A religious festival and holy day had become a carnival, an orgy of sin.

A mock religious procession with a pig nailed to a cross labelled holy Jesus.

Local paper editor "I dare God to prove he's alive"

3 days later a volcano erupted and only 1 survivor – a criminal in an underground jail.

Conclusion

So What does the Lord require of YOU ?

"To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (8)

The God who has revealed himself to you - creator, redeemer, father and judge.

It is to "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength Love your neighbour as yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these" Mark 12:29-31

Justice and hesed are balanced qualities in the nature of God - expressed through people who walk humbly with their God.

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