

# **"A Wake Up Call"**

## **Micah 6**

God by His Spirit oversaw the writing and gathering of the Bible into organized individual books. So one of the best way to understand the way God works is by studying the Bible how He gave it to us, by books or sections of books. This way we make sure we get the context so that we're not pulling spiritual rabbits out of spiritual hats, and going "Wow, where did that come from!" Not that we don't study themes in the Bible or people or places. We do it here as well still within the context of how it originally came to us.

As we come to Micah 6 we sense a change in tone and so we examine this in the context of the whole book. Micah began his book proclaiming to both the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdoms that judgment is coming because they have broken the covenant God made with them; primarily the Mosaic Covenant which are the Laws given at Mt. Sinai described in Ex. 20-Deuteronomy. Unlike the Abrahamic Covenant, which God promised unconditionally that Israel would have their land and multiply or the unconditional Davidic Covenant that Israel will have their Son of David King, the conditional Mosaic Covenant explains why at times Israel was exiled from the land and why kingship was removed at times.

The judgment Micah and all prophets announce is based on the conditions in the Mosaic Covenant where God said 'I will bless you as you obey Me, but I will also bring temporary curses if you disobey me; those temporary curses being, loss of enjoyment of land (leading to exile if they don't repent) and ungodly kings (and their temporal removal) if they don't repent.

Micah's ministry spanned the reigns of Jotham (pretty good king) through Ahaz (bad king) through Hezekiah (good but not perfect king). In Ch.'s 3-5 we are pretty sure the timing is when the Assyrians who had already taken the Northern Kingdom away in 722 BC, were now working their way to take the Southern Kingdom away, an event that happened in 701 BC. Ch.'s 3-5 were messages of hope, some of which we saw were specific messages about Hezekiah's trust in God and God's ability to save them from Assyria but also the hope of future glory under the future Son of David King, Jesus.

Ch. 6, however, is quite negative. It sounds like Israel has turned away from God. What happened? During the latter part of Hezekiah's reign, he got complacent (which we don't have time to get into) and as he aged and his rule came to a close his ungodly son Manasseh took over and introduced all kinds of idol worship resulting in a breakdown of morality. There's some clues in the text that we'll see why it's safe to come to this conclusion. It's obvious things have changed in Judah.

So God brings Israel to court. Ch. 6 is written in lawsuit language where God charges Israel with breaking the covenant, presents the incriminating evidence and pronounces His sentence. It's a wakeup call. It's an opportunity to be confronted with your sins and repent and change before it's too late.

And Biblical wake up calls to Israel are wake up calls for us also to make sure we don't go down the same path. Like Israel, God has unconditionally promised us eternal security in Him if we know His Son but that doesn't mean we, like Israel, won't experience loss of blessings if we persist in unrepentance. So let's use Micah 6 as our own wake up call:

# Let's Not Get Complacent in our Relationship with God

## **(6:1-8)**

God begins Ch. 6, twice in vv.1-2 and again in v.9 (the beginning of the two main sections) with a not so subtle hint at their covenant infidelity when He says "Hear" or "Listen". It's a clear indication that Israel has failed to "hear" (Hebrew shema) their most repeated Covenant statement from Deut. 6:4

<sup>4</sup> *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

If Hezekiah could grow complacent then so could the people. It's a wakeup call for even the most faithful of God's people to stay committed to God and don't give complacency a foothold. God calls the mountains and the foundations of the earth as His witnesses against Israel's sinfulness. Why them? It's God's way of saying Israel's sin could be seen everywhere. And when you and I get complacent in our relationship with God

### ***It's evident when its off (vv.1-2)***

Evident to those around us who know us and to those around who don't know us because they don't see any difference in us from them. We don't stand out. We don't stand up for God. Our words and actions may not seem anything different from the next person. We may not be bad but since we're not setting Jesus as Lord in our life and people aren't seeing any difference therefore no one has a reason to ask us about the hope within us because - it's not showing (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15).

We have a unique opportunity during this Covid pandemic to show our hope in God and Jesus. That we're not just trying to wait for things to get better and bemoaning our loss of life we had. We do miss it, but it's not what we live for. We are looking forward to a future with God that will last forever. The believer's world shouldn't fall apart because of a pandemic or election outcome. Let's live with hope so that it is evident to all that our happiness and contentment is not derived from circumstances here. We are supposed to pray that our world would get better and be pandemic free, but that our life is not centered around these things.

V.3 seems to indicate God is repeating something Judah has been complaining about.

<sup>3</sup> *"My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.*

They were bored with God it seemed and they no longer appreciated what He did for them. God reminds them of His unobnoxious acts of grace in their life! And that's a good reminder for us as well, when we are drifting towards complacency and wonder where is God? Why isn't He doing stuff in my life?

### ***Remember God's acts of grace (vv.3-5)***

Notice He recalls their entire rescue from Egypt where they were slaves ('Oh yeah I forgot') and sent them rescuers Moses, Aaron & Miriam ('oh yeah, right, them') which would include the miracles of the plagues, the Red Sea, manna, etc. Then he mentions the incident of Balak who hired Balaam the prophet to curse Israel and God reversed the curses. Instead, in Balaam's prophecies God promised that the nation would multiply and be strengthened more, and that a future ruler (Messiah) would come who would defeat their enemies. Things Micah had already spoken of. And Shittim was the place where Israel crossed the Jordan and Gilgal was the place on the west side

where they arrived. In other words, look at your life; you're here and have what you have because of God's miraculous and gracious acts in your life. So before we complain God hasn't done anything for us, go back and see how untrue that is. And don't just look for big things God has done in your life; He is always doing a hundred small things in our life everyday to remind us of His gracious acts of kindness.

A this point in v.6, Micah quotes the people. It's not very encouraging. Their response is basically, 'Fine. With what do I need to bring to fix our relationship and get you off my back?' The phrase 'with what' signals they forgot Ps. 15 and 24 on how to approach God. Not with more sacrifices, but with clean hands and a pure heart, stop doing evil to your neighbour, do honest dealings ... in other words God wants us a changed character, not bring him more stuff. When we need to get right with God

### ***There's no 'quick fix' solution (6:6-7)***

God doesn't need offerings and He never, ever ordered Israel to offer their firstborn!! That's idol worship. That's what Manasseh did! Manasseh brought idols into the temple and led the people into the mentality that the more you give your god the more you'll get back. God is not like that. We can't bribe God with an extra offering, a 'fine I'll serve by doing this to get God off my back' mentality. God wants our heart.

So He reminds them in v.8,

*<sup>8</sup> He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

This wasn't new. Return to the Word; these things are in my Word, I already told you. To treat people fairly, to show God's faithful love and to humble themselves before God is to

### ***Love others like God is in us (6:8)***

Because He is in us through His Spirit. When we accepted Christ, He united Himself to us. He put His Spirit in us. The life we live now is supposed to be the 'Jesus in us life' since we crucified ourselves to Him. This was the great exchange at salvation. His life for mine. That's why Paul exhorts us to get rid of the old self like old clothes and put on the new self. We just studied this in Col. 3 a few weeks ago. When Jesus comes in us our character should become more like His.

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Shouldn't surprise us that God measures the reality of our relationship by the way we treat people; specifically that we are as patient, forgiving and compassionate as He is. Not only has He already told us this but He tells us again and again wherever we read His Word. So let's not let our relationship with God drift toward complacency. Instead

## **Let's Keep our Obligations in our Relationship with God** **(6:9-16)**

Micah elaborates on what Israel was doing which has caused God's need to take action. They should have been doing the exact opposite of what they were charged with. They had obligations to keep as a covenant partner with God. As do we today under the New Covenant. To encourage us to keep our obligations in our relationship with God, we're going to be asking ourselves some questions that arise from the text.

He begins with "listen" again and states

*<sup>9</sup> Listen! The LORD is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom— “Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.*

Again, the word "Listen" or "Hear" recalls Deut. 6:4, *<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

It's an appeal to be wise and return to God. Listen to His words not the words of the culture or even the ungodly leader who happened to be Manasseh. Similarly, it's a good reminder to ask ourselves to keep us from spiritually drifting,

### ***Am I following God's Word or other's words? (v.9)***

We may not even be aware that we are following our words or words others place before us everyday. We can get so caught up in our agenda - or the agenda others give us or our kids - that we blindly just do it because that's the way everyone else is doing it. And not even realize we don't involve God in the picture. So we are 'following' the cultural cycle of "work, family activities, my own recreation"; "work, family activities, my own recreation"; etc. And we try to squeeze time for God into that. So then whose words are we following? Whose running our life? The schedule we have allowed our culture to impose on us (or we've imposed on ourselves)? The most important part of Deut. 6:4-5 is "love the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength. Not compartmentalize God into our timetable. All means "Centrally". How do I manage my responsibilities and activities with God at the center of my life? Meaning every time the culture wants to change my agenda (or I want to) I run it through God's divine filter, His Word. Is this going to help or hinder my walk with God?

Micah lays out some specific accusations in vv.10-11,

*<sup>10</sup> Am I still to forget your ill-gotten treasures, you wicked house, and the short ephah, which is accursed?*

*<sup>11</sup> Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? <sup>12</sup> Your rich people are violent; your inhabitants are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully.*

Idolatry and immorality lead to dishonesty and injustice. It was an unfortunate common practise to have the scales tipped in the sellers' favour. Instead of legitimately providing the people with a product they needed at a fair price, they robbed the people and got verbally aggressive if they were questioned. It's easy to think this doesn't involve us, but the root of dishonesty is your value of people. So our next question is,

### ***Do I seek to bless people or use them? (vv.10-12)***

All forms of injustice and robbery are rooted in the selfish worldview that says 'I need to use people to get ahead'. Again we may think, how am I using people to get ahead? It may be more like I only converse with the people I need to because they have information I need that to do what I need to do. In other words we use people for our own purposes. We're not really that interested in getting to know them, finding out what they need in case God has gifted me to bless them with my skills, resources or friendship. And at the very least to know how to pray for them better.

So the charges have been laid, now God announces the sentence:

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins. <sup>14</sup> You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing, because what you save I will give to the sword. <sup>15</sup> You will plant but not harvest; you will press olives but not use the oil, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine.*

This is right out of Deuteronomy 28 where God told Israel through Moses that if you keep this covenant you will experience the blessings of fruitfulness of the land and protection from your enemies. But God also told them that they would experience the opposite – loss of blessings of the land and defeat at the hand of their enemies, including exile – if they disobey the Mosaic Covenant. So for Israel, it was very evident that their obedience was tied to rain and fruitfulness of land. We don't have the same equivalent promise in the church but there is an overriding spiritual principle and that is contentment. When we're walking with God we sense His presence. The pathway to prayer is more open and we are willing to trust God's leading in our life because even in the negative things, we are right with God and we are resting in His guidance. So, another question we should ask ourselves is,

### ***Am I usually content or rarely content? (vv.13-15)***

God withheld the blessing of the land from Israel. They did all the right things you should do but they never seemed to get ahead. They planted but had little to show for it, so they were often hungry. They pressed the olive oil, but didn't get to use it for themselves, for which it had many purposes. They never got ahead. They never got to enjoy life and experience God's rest. Why? Because they weren't walking with God. They were discontent for the wrong reasons. So instead of drawing near to God they worshipped what Omri and Ahab (wicked kings of Israel), Baal. Baal was supposed to provide you with the fruit of the land, but he couldn't since he didn't exist.

Here's why we experience discontentment; we look for worldly circumstances and not the rest of God. God and Jesus promise to take our burdens, to give us the peace that surpasses all understanding and to give us the spiritual strength to be content whether we are in plenty or in want. When we look for contentment other than from God, that's a form of idolatry. Idolatry is sin and sin disrupts our fellowship with God resulting in a restless feeling of never finding peace and rarely content. We get on the rollercoaster of worldly happiness and it never seems to stop because we won't find contentment in the things the Baals of our time promise to provide. And if God is waking us up out of our discontentment this morning, then we have a choice and it's the final question we get from v.16

### ***Are we willing to repent when God speaks?***

Omri and Ahab were two of Israel's most wicked kings. Of Omri God said in 1 Kings 16:25,

*<sup>25</sup> But Omri did what was evil in the LORD's sight, even more than any of the kings before him.*

He deserved all of 3 verses in the Bible because his son Ahab was worse than him. Of which God said 5 verses later,

*<sup>30</sup> But Ahab son of Omri did what was evil in the LORD's sight, even more than any of the kings before him. <sup>31</sup> And as though it were not enough to follow the sinful example of Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to bow down in worship of Baal. <sup>32</sup> First Ahab built a*

*temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him.*

So when God says to the Israelites here in Micah's day

*<sup>16</sup> You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house, and you have followed their traditions. Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations*

God was giving the Southern Kingdom (not the north, they already went into exile) a wake up call. They thought they were the good guys. They weren't like the guys from the north who got what they deserved – exile in 722 BC by the Assyrians.

This is the way we all think. My sins aren't too bad. Yeah, I know I need to clean up my act and get right with God. As soon as work eases up, as soon as the kid's schedule clears up, once I get this debt paid off . . . and the worldly excuses keep piling up. What's it going to take for us to wake up before our own life gets more messy? God is speaking through His Word, how will we respond?

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