

The Minor Prophets
Lesson 24: “Thy Kingdom Come”
(Micah 6—7)

III. A Challenge Message: Trust the Lord Now (Micah 6:1—7:20)

The Prophet had delivered two of his messages: a message of warning (chaps. 1—2) and a message of promise (chaps. 3—5). His third message was a challenge for the Jews to trust the Lord and obey His will, for only then could the nation escape terrible punishment and fulfill God’s purposes in this world.

As you read Old Testament history and prophecy, keep in mind how important it was for Israel to be obedient to the Lord. God had raised up the nation to bring blessing to the whole world (Gen. 12:1-3), for it was through Israel that the Savior would come. “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). When the Jews began to adopt the practices of the godless nations around them, it defiled them and made them less able to do the work God had called them to do. It was because they despised their high and holy calling that the nation had to be chastened so severely.

Micah’s first message was presented as a courtroom drama, and so was this third message. The Judge declared the indictment (Mic. 6:1-8), pronounced the sentence (6:9—7:7), and then graciously promised mercy (7:7-20)! Micah used these factors—guilt, punishment, and mercy—as arguments to plead with his people to repent and return to the Lord. “Trust the Lord, not in spite of these things but because of these things!” is his closing message; and it’s a message we need to hear today.

A. Because of Great Guilt, Trust the Lord (6:1-8)

The sins of the people were hidden behind a veneer of religious activity—routine worship that didn’t come from their hearts. Micah’s contemporary, the prophet Isaiah, told the people that the nation was sick from head to foot (Isa. 1:5-6) but wouldn’t admit it, and their “worship” was nothing more than “trampling” the temple courts (v. 12). They were like the patient who asked the doctor to retouch his X-rays so he wouldn’t have to endure surgery! His deceit didn’t cure him; it made him worse.

1. **In this courtroom scene, the Lord called the witnesses (vv. 1-2)** and told the people to be prepared to plead their case.
 - The Lord opened the proceedings by telling His side of the controversy, emphasizing the gracious way He had dealt with the nation from the very beginning. He redeemed them from Egyptian slavery; He gave them leaders who guided them through the wilderness with His help; and he brought them to their promised inheritance.
 - And throughout this journey, the Lord had to put up with their unbelief, disobedience, and repeated complaints (Ps. 106).
 - On three occasions, Balak, king of Moab, commanded Balaam to curse Israel, but God turned the curse into blessing (Num. 22-24; Deut. 23:5; Neh. 13:2). The Israelites didn’t even know that this spiritual battle was going on; yet, God protected His people.

- What did the Jews do in return? They became friendly with the Moabites, attended their idolatrous religious rites, and committed fornication with their women! (See Num. 25). What Balaam couldn't do by means of his curses, the Jews themselves did with their sinful lusts.
- The phrase "from Shittim unto Gilgal" (Mic. 6:5) reminded the people of Israel's crossing of the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land (Josh. 3—4). God was good to the people, and He did for them what they could not do for themselves, but they didn't remember.
- The word remember is written at least fourteen times in the book of Deuteronomy, and frequently the Jews were instructed to teach their children the mighty deeds of the Lord (Ex. 10:2; 13:8; Deut. 6:20; Josh. 22:24; Ps. 78:1-8).

While we don't live in the past, we must learn from the past, or we'll commit the same mistakes. Because Israel forgot God's mercies (Ps. 106:7), they also ignored God's commandments. The result was a hard heart that deliberately rebelled against God's will. God had every right to ask them, "What have I done to you that you should treat Me this way?"

2. Now the people replied to God (vv. 6-7).

- Instead of confessing their sins or standing mute because their mouths had been shut by their sense of guilt (Rom. 3:19), they asked what they could do to get rid of their sins. Their request shows how shallow their spiritual life really was and that they were ignorant of the enormity of their sin and the high cost of forgiveness.
- They were like the rich young ruler who didn't really see himself as a condemned sinner before God (Mark 10:17-27), and they were not like the people at Pentecost who were cut to the heart and cried out "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).
- We get the impression that these questioners were interested in bargaining with God and "buying Him off," for they kept raising the bid (see verse 6-7). But God doesn't bargain with sinners, and none of the sacrifices they offered to bring could have cleansed them from their sins.
- "Doing penance" without truly repenting and trusting God's mercy only multiplies the sin and deadens the conscience. "Thinking they were good enough to please God, the people asked Jesus, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" He replied, "this is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28-29 NKJV).
- True saving faith comes from a heart that's been broken in repentance and realizes that no amount of good works can atone for sin (Acts 20:21; 26:20; Eph. 2:8-9).

3. The prophet spoke to the people (v. 8) and told them exactly what the Lord wanted each of them to do.

- It was a personal matter that each individual sinner had to consider. His reply emphasized moral and ethical conduct, not religious ceremonies. Of course, we can't "do justly" unless we've been justified by faith and are right with God (Ps. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:1-8). And how can we "love mercy" if we've not personally experienced God's mercy (Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5)? If we want to "walk humbly with

[our] God,” we must first bow humbly before Him, confess our sins, and claim His promise of forgiveness (Luke 14:11; James 4:10).

- The Lord’s parable about the Pharisee and publican in the temple (Luke 18:19-14) illustrates all three points.
- To make Micah 6:8 a salvation text is to misunderstand what the prophet was saying to God’s disobedient covenant people. None of us can do what God requires until first we come to God as broken sinners who need to be saved.
- “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5).

The people to whom Micah ministered simply didn’t get the point of his messages. The very fact that they were so guilty before God should have motivated them to turn from their shallow religion, humble themselves, and seek God’s mercy. The only people God can save are lost people; the only people God can forgive are guilty people. If we see ourselves as God sees us, then we can by faith become what He wants us to become.

B. Because of Impending Judgment, Trust the Lord (6:9—7:7)

For the second time in this message, Micah cried out to the people, “Listen!” (vv. 1, 9 NIV). Like the crowds that Jesus taught, these Jews had ears to hear His words, but they couldn’t hear God’s truth in those words (Matt. 13:9, 43). They lacked spiritual discernment.

1. **God speaks about sin and its consequences (6:9-16).** The Lord called to the people of Jerusalem to fear His name and heed what He had to say; for without the fear of the Lord, they could have neither knowledge nor wisdom (Prov. 1:7).

- God specifically condemned the merchants of the city for being deceptive in their business practices (Mic. 6:10-12).
 - They used weights and measures that were dishonest so that customers didn’t get full value for their money.
- This sin grieved the Lord so much because by doing these illegal things, the businessmen were exploiting and abusing the poor and needy in the land whom God has special concern (Amos 8:4-10). The wealthy merchants had abandoned the Mosaic economic system that provide care of the poor and needy. They robbed the poor of both justice and the necessities of life; a sin God could not overlook.
- The rich were openly violent (Mic. 6:12; also 2:2; 3:1-3). They forcibly evicted people from their houses and land and left them helpless, without homes or any source of income. These rich merchants lied about these situations in court when the poor tried to protect themselves. The rich convinced the officials they were right.
 - But God has ordained that people reap what they sow, whether good or evil (Hos. 8:7; Gal. 6:7-8). Therefore, judgment had to fall on the “robber barons” of the land. God warned about two different kinds of judgments (Mic. 6:13-16).
 - The first (vv. 13-15) was already in progress, slow and secret, but very thorough, “Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins” (v.13 NIV). This judgment was the collapse of their economic system, including their crops (stolen farms), their investments (stolen money), and even their enjoyment of all that they had accumulated.

- The second judgment (Mic. 6:16) would be sudden and open: the total ruin of the nation by the hand of Babylon. That Micah should point to Babylon as the aggressor (4:10) is remarkable, because Babylon wasn't a major power on the international scene at the time. It was Assyria that everybody feared, and Assyria did ruin the northern kingdom in 722 BC and did great damage to Judah in 701.
- By the time Babylon was finished with Judah and Jerusalem, the nation would be in ruin and the people in derision. The people's sins found them out.

The Lord tried to use the judgment on the northern kingdom to awaken and warn the people of Judah, the southern kingdom, but they wouldn't listen. Their defense was "It can't happen here. We have the temple!" But they weren't obeying God's law or honoring His house. Instead, they were following the godless ways of two kings of Israel, Omri and Ahab, both of whom "did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did worse than all who were before [them]" (1 Kings 16:25; see v. 30 NKJV). They should have followed the godly ways of King David, because for David's sake that God held back His judgment for so long (11:13, 32, 34, 36; 15:4).

2. **The prophet speaks of his sorrow (7:1-7).** The prophets not only declared God's message with their lips, but they also felt the burden of the people on their hearts. Jeremiah wept over the sins of the nation in his day and wished he could weep even more (Jer. 9:1ff), and Micah lamented because there were no godly people left in the land. Looking for a godly person was as futile as looking for summer fruit after the harvest was over.
 - Micah compared the evil officials to hunters who wove clever nets and threw them over the helpless and trapped them. These officials and judges were skilled at weaving their nets (perverting the law so they could rob the unwary), but they weren't skilled at obeying God's law.
 - "The day of your watchmen" refers to the day of judgment when the watchmen on the walls would see the enemy approaching and call out to warn the people. God's prophets were His watchmen (Ezek. 3:18-21), constantly warning the nation, but the leaders wouldn't listen. They preferred lies to truth, and this brought about a "time of...confusion" (Mic. 7:4 NIV).
 - The confusion reached into every level of society. Not only was Micah grieved at the corruption of the officials, but also, he was grieved at the unfaithfulness of the common people of the land (vv. 5-6). You couldn't trust anybody!
 - It had come to the place where neighbor couldn't trust neighbor and friends couldn't trust one another. The basic unit of Jewish society, the family, was quickly falling apart.

Considering the terrible conditions of the land and the judgment that was impending, wouldn't it have been a wise thing for the people to turn from their sins and trust the Lord? Would it not have been a smart thing for them to claim 2 Chronicles 7:14 and seek God's face so the He might heal their land?

C. Because of God's Great Mercies, Trust the Lord (7:7-20)

The prophet reached a turning point when he looked away from the sins of the people and meditated on the faithfulness of the Lord. "But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for

God my Savior; my God will hear me” (v. 7 NIV). He would watch and pray” and put his trust only in the Lord. This verse is a “bridge” that connects the sections on sin and judgment with this closing section on hope.

In this final section of Micah’s third message, we must distinguish several voices: the nation (vv. 8-10), the prophet (vv. 11-13), the Lord (vv. 14-15), and the prophet again (vv. 16-20). We must also realize that Micah is looking down through the centuries with prophetic vision to the time when Israel will come through the great tribulation to come, “dress rehearsals” as it were.

But the future will bring victory to God’s people, not defeat, when the Lord fulfills His promises and establishes the kingdom.

- 1. The voice of the nation (vv. 8-10).** Perhaps the prophet is speaking on behalf of the remnant as he expresses their faith and courage. The enemy gloated over the defeated Jews and asked in derision, “Where is the Lord your God?” (v. 10 NIV; see Ps. 42:3, 10; 79:10). But the people trusted God and had confidence that, though they were in darkness, they would see light; and though they had been defeated, they would eventually conquer their enemies and trample them like mud in the street.
 - Since these events did not occur after the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, they must be assigned to a future time. According to Jesus, the Jewish nation will experience great tribulation and become the target of all the gentile nations in the end times (Matt. 24:15-31).
 - In the end Christ will return and give His people great victory.
- 2. The voice of the prophet (vv. 11-14).** Micah speaks to the city of Jerusalem and assures her that, though she had been attacked and destroyed, she would one day be rebuilt. The prophets speak in glowing terms of Israel having a new city and temple (Isa. 2:1-5; Ezek. 40-48). Not only that, but also the boundaries of Israel would be expanded to include more territory than the nation had before.
 - Considering this great promise, the prophet lifted his heart to the Lord in prayer (Mic. 7:14) and asked Him to be the faithful Shepherd of Israel and care for His people (see 5:4).
 - Micah longed for “the good old days” when the land was fruitful and peaceful, and the people were like obedient sheep who followed their Shepherds.
- 3. The voice of the Lord (v. 15).** God replied to His faithful servant and assured him that He would indeed watch over His flock and care for them, just as He had when they had departed from the land of Egypt. The “exodus” image is sometimes used in Scripture to point to the “exodus” of the Jews in the end times from the nations of the world to their own land. God will perform great wonders for His people at a time in their history when the nations are united against them.
- 4. The voice of the prophet (vv. 16-20).** When Israel departed from Egypt and God opened the sea, the other nations heard about it and feared. But the wonders the Lord will do for Israel in the last days will startle the nations even more. The Gentiles will see the power of God and be ashamed and unable to act. They will come out of their hiding places to submit to the Lord. It will mean total victory for Israel.

- **But the most important event will not be Israel's victory over her enemies, but God's victory over Israel.**
- The prophet was confident of the unchanging character of God. "Who is a God like you?" (Mic. 7:18 NIV) reminds us of the meaning of Micah's name, "Who is like the Lord?" He is a God who pardons sins, forgives transgressions, and delights in showing mercy.

In the coming of Jesus Christ to this world, God fulfilled some of the promises He made to the Jews (Luke 1:72-73), and He will fulfill the rest of His promises as well. "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ" (2 Cor. 1:20 NIV).

No matter how dark the day, the light of God's promises is still shining. No matter how confusing and frightening our circumstances, the character of God remains the same. You have every reason to trust Him!

Questions for Personal Reflections Or Group Discussion

1. Why do you need to trust the Lord?
2. Wiersbe's paraphrase of Micah's closing message is "Trust the Lord, not in spite of these things but *because of these things!*" What does this mean?
3. Why is it easy to take for granted the great things God has done on our behalf centuries ago, or even years ago?
4. Do you think there are spiritual battles going on of which we are unaware, and yet God is protecting us? How do you respond when you think about this?
5. Why is the word *remember* so important in our spiritual lives?
6. When people try to justify themselves by their works, what are they ignorant of?
7. What inner attitudes and outward actions does true repentance involve?
8. Micah 6:8 does not mention belief or faith as a requirement of God. How can you fit this together with John 6:28-29?
9. What unjust business practices go on today? How do you think we should respond to the fact that God hates such things?
10. When the future seems hopeless, how can our trust in God be strengthened?

Homework: Read **Zephaniah 1-2**. Study title: There's a Great Day Coming!