

Corrupt Leadership

Micah 3:1-12

Introduction – Chapter 3 begins the second of three cycles in Micah’s prophecy. Princes, prophets and priests are all rebuked by God in this chapter. When these heads have become corrupted, the nation is threatened with destruction. There is much repetition here from the first cycle, and it is all bad news.

The chapter can be read as three oracles of judgment, each covering four verses, containing an address (1, 5, 9), accusations (2, 5, 9), and judgment (4, 6, 12).

Civil Corruption (vv1-4) – Micah is not afraid to use grotesque word pictures (copied into the Word of God to be preached in the pulpit) to describe the state of the nation. Elsewhere, Jesus taught us there is a time to call our leaders ‘a pit of snakes’, and worse.

Who Should Know Justice? (v1) – If anyone should, these leaders of the people of God should. These judges have been given the Law, but corruption blinds them. They hear the pleas for justice, but corruption deafens them.

Civil Barbarians (vv 2-3) – Without the foundation of the Word of God, legal systems or brute strength will be used to enslave a people to serve some corrupt elite. Nations that are not in submission to the King of kings will become shepherds who devour their sheep. And they start with the weakest.

A Deaf Ear for a Deaf Ear (v4) – God’s judgment displays His justice. The weak and oppressed cried out to these leaders and they would not answer or help them. So, when they cry out to God for help, He will not answer them either. God is finished with them.

The Warning – There are multitudes now in hell and multitudes now alive in the world whom God is finished striving and wooing and calling. They lost their souls not because they did not have a chance, but because they continued to put off God and His Word – until He left them, never to return again. “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...”

Religious Hucksters (vv5-8) – Some false prophets were charlatans, but others had some divine gift – a gift the Lord would take away (v6). Balaam was not a true prophet of God, but had a gift. Deut 13 warns God’s people not to follow those simply because they can give a sign of the miraculous. Micaiah (1 Kings 22:19-23) saw the Lord send out an evil spirit to confuse the prophets.

Belly-gods (v5) – Just as Paul describes in Phil 3:19, their motivation is their stomach, not the glory of God. There are always ears to be tickled and a profit to be made in the realm of religion. This is one reason why the qualification of an elder must include ‘not greedy for money’.

Publicly Shamed (vv6-7) – If they will not listen to the Word as given, these prophets will have their crystal balls darkened. And those who once had ‘a gift’ will be carried off as snake-oil salesmen when their prophesies of ‘peace’ do not come to pass.

True Prophet (v8) – Micah had an ardent love for God and for the souls of men, a deep concern for His glory and their salvation, and a flaming zeal against sin. He had courage to reprove, not fearing the mighty or the multitudes. Even though these types of preachers bring hard words, we pray for God to fill our pulpits with many, for this would be true mercy.

The Sin of Priests and Princes and the Ruin of Churches and States (vv9-12) –

Building With Blood (v10) – The appearance of prosperity is no automatic sign of blessing. If the increase has come without regard for God’s Law, and particularly at the expense of the weak, there will be hell to pay.

Blessing for Profit (v11) – This final oracle seems to accelerate with raw and blatant corruption and presumption. As the restraints are lifted, the rebellion only grows.

Prophecy of Destruction (v12) – This is quoted in Jeremiah 26:18, where we learn that Hezekiah heard this warning, turned to the Lord in repentance, and delayed the judgment until a later day. In God’s abounding mercy, it is not always too late to turn to Him.

Application –

Is It Not For You To Know Judgment? – We have so much more than those judges or prophets had been given – things which even angels long to look into. We have the complete Scriptures. We must make sure that we ‘by reason of use have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil’ (Heb 5:14). That means we must know, and we must practice what we know.

Heads – The building block of all civil and church government is the family. We may not have princes and prophets in our midst, but we do have many heads. Fathers/husbands must understand these warnings are directly applicable to you. Your sin is never secret forever, for it works itself out upon your family to the third and fourth generation. The sin of the head will infect the body.

Prosperity and Reputation – Both are only safe in the fear of the Lord. Neither can protect you from His wrath for there is no stopping the righteous justice of God. And those who seem to die ‘happy sinners’ still face the terrible and final Judgment Day.

How blessed we are who know there is a chapter 4 and 5 to come in Micah.

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