

Hear the Rod!

Micah 6:9 – 7:6

Introduction – In these remaining verses of Chapter 6, Micah seems to close the door of any remaining hope of restoration of Israel, but not because of God's impatience. Stubborn, hard-hearted and presumptuous, Israel will not respond to the charges. God, however, is faithful to His covenant, and His sentence is just what is required for this longstanding betrayal.

Turning a Deaf Ear (6:9-12) – Crying out to the city, representing the whole nation, the prophet sends a message of national judgment. Only the wise will see this to be from the Lord. Everyone else laughs at the preacher and blames the fates when disaster comes. Only the wise hear the whistle of the divine rod as it makes its way down upon the backside of the nation.

Treasures of Wickedness – The Lord clearly told Israel what He requires of them (6:8), and like the rich man in Jesus' day, they refuse to do anything of the kind. At the temple they are willing to sacrifice even their children (and they did in Ahaz's day - 2 Kings 16:2-4). But in the marketplace, they aren't willing to deal *justly* with their wallets and weights, let alone to consider showing mercy to the weak.

Unfruitful Labor (6:13-16) – There are no guarantees that your prosperity will continue. But what is harder to believe is that if your prosperity does continue, there is no guarantee that you will be able to enjoy it.

Make You Sick (v13) – The wicked “*swallows down riches and vomits them up again; God casts them out of his belly*” (Job 20:15).

You Shall Eat (v14-15) – The covetous are never satisfied (Eccl 5:10). And prosperous days will give themselves up to days of famine, sword, and judgment. This is the way of a rebellious world. Foreigners may take it, your government may take it, or your neighbor may take it. The point is, that if God wants it to go – it will be gone.

God hasn't lost his cool, arbitrarily declaring curses. These are the specific curses He promised in the covenant He made with Israel (Lev 26:16, 26, Deut 28:30, 38-40).

Omri & Ahab (v16) – These are two wicked, idolatrous kings who ruled Israel more than 100 years before Micah's day. Ahab was known for worshipping false gods, marrying wicked unbelieving women, and laughing and persecuting the prophets of God. When that happens at the top, judgment is coming, and the ramifications of such sin will affect generations to come.

The Prophet's Lament (7:1-6) – Ahab, you will recall, ruled in the days of Elijah, and here, Micah sounds like Elijah in his prayer of loneliness. Judgment has come when –

You Stand Alone (7:1-2) – Trying to find another faithful man in Micah's day was like trying to find a piece of choice fruit after the harvest.

The Best is Simply 'the Lesser of Two Evils' (7:3-4) – He can't find a prince or a judge who is faithful to the Word. The ones who are the best are still a thorn in the side.

Even Your Family Hates You (7:5-6) – The closest of relational ties, friends and family, cannot be trusted when the cutting sword of gospel truth is proclaimed. When this happens it reveals how fallen our natures are, and when it happens on a national scale it is a sign of certain doom. Christ taught that these would be the signs of coming judgment upon Jerusalem as well, but He also taught that true disciples love Him more, regardless of the cost (Matt 10:16-39).

We Must Hear the Rod! – Matthew Henry said “*He warns before He wounds because He is not willing that any should perish*”.

Individuals and nations which are wise will heed these words and seek true repentance and forgiveness from the Lord. Fools will go on their merry way because “it's the economy, stupid”.

Delay is not a Sign of Apathy – We kill babies and call it choice, we endorse sodomy and call it tolerance, we ridicule mothers who 'just stay home' and call it “Women's Lib” while their children grow up in day-care centers. We refuse to protect our women from violence (in pornography and on the battlefield) and call it freedom (of speech) and equality. And yet, the Dow is up, Mr. Bush is president-elect – life is good. We should be wincing with expectation and crying out for mercy.

Do Not Compartmentalize Your Life – God does not evaluate your obedience in the last fifteen minutes outside the context of all your other activities, responsibilities and relationships. He is not interested in your offering, if you will not obey him elsewhere (Matt 5:21-24). He hates cups that are only clean on the outside. In addition, James warns us that if we have stumbled in one point of the law, we are guilty of breaking it all (James 2:1-10).

Standing for Righteousness Can Lead to Standing Alone – In a time where there is so much rebellion to the Lord Jesus Christ, you should expect that there will be days when Micah 7:5-6 or Matt 10:34-35 will be manifest before your eyes in your home, neighborhood, or office. Micah, Elijah, the apostles, and Jesus Himself, knew what it was like to be in that place. You too, must stand firm to the end.

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