

06-12-16 – Who is Like God?

Micah 6:8

“What’s in a name? In the Bible, names are often highly significant. For example, the book of Genesis contains the story of a man named Methuselah – a famous name because Methuselah is the oldest man in Scripture (and presumably the oldest person who ever lived). When Methuselah was born, his father, Enoch, gave him a name that proved not only significant, but prophetic: In Hebrew, it means, ‘When he dies, it will come.’ Methuselah lived 969 years, and the year in which he died, the Great Flood of Noah came.” (Adventuring Through the Bible, Ray Stedman, p. 407).

The name Micah means "Who is like God?" Therefore, this is his repeated question. Everywhere this man went, apparently, this is what he said: "Who is like God?"---until people began to call him this. There is some suggestion that this may even have been a nickname that was given to this man. The theme of this book is Godlikeness and the great message of God to the world today is how to be like God. What does the godly life look like?

Names are very important in the O.T. especially for a prophet. It also establishes credibility. Micah served the Lord during the reigns of kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah about 800 years before Christ.

Micah speaks of the hatred of God toward sin and of His judgment against sin (the sin of Judah and Israel). BUT – he also speaks of God’s love of His people. They blew it, as we all do, but He is ready and willing to forgive and restore them just as He is the same toward us today.

We think of God as this loving, compassionate, and forgiving God (and He is) – almost like a cosmic push-over. However, Micah shows us the reality of God’s hatred toward sin, His judgment against even His own people who sin. His judgment is real and appropriate!

However, God shows His grace to all, and He extends His mercy and forgiveness to any who truly repent of their sin. Micah lists the sins of the nation. I’ll mention some here and you can look up the references on your own if you like: fraud (2:2), theft (2:8), greed (2:9), debauchery (2:11), oppression (3:3), hypocrisy (3:4), heresy (3:5), injustice (3:9), extortion and lying (6:12), murder (7:12), and other offenses. God’s judgment against these things is sure and coming upon them.

“According to a British survey, an average citizen of the United Kingdom violates five rules a week, which amounts to 260 rules a year, or ~16,250 in a lifetime. These range from jaywalking to littering to piggybacking on someone else’s wireless service. Of course, with millions of laws on the books, it’s hard for any of us to make it through a week without some kind of infraction. **Micah 6:8** suggests a far simpler code of conduct: ***‘He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you God.’*** TEXT – More Later.

(Understanding the 66 Books of the Bible, Dr. David Jeremiah, p. 145)

Micah prophesied during the time of Isaiah. Their books are very similar in content. Micah’s book is sometimes referred to as “Isaiah in miniature.”

The book is divided into three sections:

1 – Ch. 1-3 – describe the failure of the nation of Israel and especially Judah, the southern kingdom. Many prophets preach on this theme, but Micah focuses on the failure to live a life of Godlikeness or Godliness.

2 – Ch. 4-5 – He contrasts Israel’s ungodliness with a vision of the One who is to come – The Godlike One

3 – Ch. 6-7 – God’s plea that the nation repent and return to Him.

Ch. 1 - Let’s look at this little gem of prophecy found with the other minor prophets – not because of importance, but because of size only.

READ: Micah 1:1-5 (NLT) - *The LORD gave this message to Micah of Moresheth during the years when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. The visions he saw concerned both Samaria and Jerusalem.*

² Attention! Let all the people of the world listen! Let the earth and everything in it hear. The Sovereign LORD is making accusations against you; the Lord speaks from his holy Temple.

³ Look! The LORD is coming! He leaves his throne in heaven and tramples the heights of the earth.

⁴ The mountains melt beneath his feet and flow into the valleys like wax in a fire, like water pouring down a hill.

⁵ And why is this happening? Because of the rebellion of Israel — yes, the sins of the whole nation. Who is to blame for Israel’s rebellion? Samaria, its capital city!

Where is the center of idolatry in Judah? In Jerusalem, its capital!

Micah drops the bomb. Here’s the problem... God’s people are living godless lives and think nothing of it. Micah tells us that God is striding in judgment against this nation (all who live ungodly lives – even today). The people failed to live godly lives even though God provided everything they need to be godly. Sound familiar? We have been given all we need to live godly lives in the Holy Spirit, yet we fall short on a regular basis.

In yesterday’s Newday, Rabbi Gelman tried to answer the question of what translation of the Bible is the best. In his answer he said a very true statement... Any translation includes interpretation. Original languages are the only really accurate way to get the actual meaning. This is mostly true.

Micah, inspired by God, wrote puns in his speeches against the cities of the Judah. We talked before about the meaning of names. Eugene Peterson has a PhD in ancient languages, and he was a professor of languages. His interpretation of the Hebrew in Micah 1:10-16 captures the puns that Micah intended. I’ll read from the Message, but I will also give you the literal English name for the cities.

Micah 1:10-16 – THE MESSAGE –

(Gath – tell) - Don’t gossip about this in Telltown. Don’t waste your tears.

(Beth-leaphrah – house of dust) - In Dustville, roll in the dust.

(Shaphir – pleasant) - In Alarmtown, the alarm is sounded. (exiled naked and ashamed)

(Zaanan – come out) - The citizens of Exitburgh will never get out alive.

(Beth-ezel – adjoining house) - Lament, Last-Stand City: There's nothing in you left standing.
(Maroth – bitter) - The villagers of Bittertown wait in vain for sweet peace.
(Jerusalem) - Harsh judgment has come from GOD and entered Peace City.
(Lachish – team of horses) - All you who live in Chariotville, get in your chariots for flight. You led the daughter of Zion into trusting not God but chariots. Similar sins in Israel also got their start in you.
(Moresheth-gath – gift, dowry) - Go ahead and give your good-bye gifts to Good-byeville.
(Aczib – deception) - Miragetown beckoned but disappointed Israel's kings.
(Mareshah – conqueror) - Inheritance City has lost its inheritance.
(Adullam – the glory) – Glorytown has seen its last of glory.
Shave your heads in mourning over the loss of your precious towns.
Go bald as a goose egg—they've gone into exile and aren't coming back.

“Some people in Judah had settled into lives that were easy and comfortable, living under the illusion that God was indifferent to how they lived. But he wasn't indifferent, and his judgment was proof of that. In verses 10-16, the name of each town triggered a blast of judgment. Communities that were intended to be centers for administering justice and ladling out mercy had become centers of oppression and self-indulgence. And God wouldn't stand for it. He cared too much to stand for it.”
(The Message Study Bible, Eugene Peterson, comment, p. 1421)

Ch. 2-3 – more explanation of Judah's sin and God's judgment - - “Micah has been seeking godliness in the southern kingdom of Judah, and he looks where he expects to find it – among the rulers of the nation, among the representatives of God. But there he finds only corruption, oppression, bribery, and injustice.” (Adventuring Through the Bible, Ray Stedman, p. 409)

There's a saying that goes, “The fish stinks from the head down.” This is especially true in Judah. Micah exposes the problem. Those who have been given authority to act in God's stead have forgotten that they are responsible to God. In the N.T. we are reminded that all authority comes from God and all in authority are under our master in heaven. God holds all in authority responsible and accountable to Himself. (Eph. 6:9).

Micah 3:11 (NLT) - You rulers make decisions based on bribes; you priests teach God's laws only for a price; you prophets won't prophesy unless you are paid. Yet all of you claim to depend on the LORD. “No harm can come to us,” you say, “for the LORD is here among us.”

When you serve in a position of authority, you represent God in that position – church, work, community, etc.

Rom. 13:1 (NLT) - Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God.

When we forget this, it can easily lead to corruption, oppression, bribery, suffering – and – judgment.

Ch. 4 – a shift in focus... Micah sees the coming of the One who is Godlike. This is a beautiful passage of the Messiah that will not be fulfilled until Jesus comes again and establishes true world peace.

Micah 4:1-4 (NLT) - *In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's house will be the highest of all— the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship. ² People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. ³ The LORD will mediate between peoples and will settle disputes between strong nations far away. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. ⁴ Everyone will live in peace and prosperity, enjoying their own grapevines and fig trees, for there will be nothing to fear. The LORD of Heaven's Armies has made this promise!*

Only Jesus knows how to rule in godlikeness – He is Godlike – Only He can bring about world peace.

Ch. 5 – opens with a prophecy about Jesus' first coming...

Micah 5:1 (NLT) - *Mobilize! Marshal your troops! The enemy is laying siege to Jerusalem. They will strike Israel's leader in the face with a rod.*

When Jesus stood before Pilate, the rulers of the nation struck Him with a stick, placed a crown of thorns on His head, mocked Him, and lead Him away to be crucified. (Matt. 27:27-30)

Then the prophet suddenly sees where this ruler is to come from. The O.T. accurately predicts where Jesus would be born.

Micah 5:2 (NLT) - *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.*

Matt. 2:1-6 (NLT) - *Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ² "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."*

³ King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: (Quotes Micah 5:2)

⁶ 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'

Ch. 6-7 – God pleads with His people to show them the way of Godlikeness. This is His desire for them and for us.

Micah writes – **Micah 6:1-2 (NLT) - *Listen to what the LORD is saying: "Stand up and state your case against me. Let the mountains and hills be called to witness your complaints. ² And now, O mountains, listen to the LORD's complaint! He has a case against his people. He will bring charges against Israel.***

That sets the stage. Now God speaks, and this is what He has to say:

Micah 6:3-5 (NLT) - “O my people, what have I done to you? What have I done to make you tired of me? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to help you. ⁵ Don’t you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead? And remember your journey from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, when I, the LORD, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness.”

This is how the people respond to God:

Micah 6:6-7 (NLT) - *What can we bring to the LORD? Should we bring him burnt offerings? Should we bow before God Most High with offerings of yearling calves? ⁷ Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins?*

God gives us His simple answer (we sang it this morning):

Micah 6:8 (NLT) - *No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*

That’s the answer! The only way to Godlikeness is to walk humbly with God (your God – personal). He is the only One who can make us Godlike. “Sometimes we make the Christian life into something it’s not – placing ourselves under arbitrary, self-imposed rules, long lists of do’s and don’ts, restrictive disciplines, and complicated objectives. The prophet Micah, however, boils it all down by asking, “What does the Lord require?” He requires us to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him – period.

“Micah’s question rings in our ears: Who is like God? Only the one who walks with the Messiah, Jesus the Lord, the one who patterns his or her life after the life of the Messiah, the one who acts justly (as He acted), who shows mercy (as He showed mercy), and who walks humbly (as He walked). God pleads with us, and beneath the thundering of His judgment, we hear the steady, insistent heartbeat of His love. He is merciful, and He waits for us to turn to Him for forgiveness, for restoration, for fellowship with Him, so that He can shape us and mold us to become the people for whom Micah was searching – people who are like God.” (Adventuring Through the Bible, Ray Stedman, p. 412)

READ – Illustration from *On the Way to the Future*, Ray Stedman, p. 199, Ch. 10 – The Last Word.

I once hears a story about a priest in the Philippines, and while I cannot say for certain that the story is literally true, I know that it contains a great truth. It’s the story of a Catholic priest who loved God dearly and served Him faithfully. But deep within his soul, he carried a burden of guilt for a secret sin he had committed many years before, while he was in seminary. Even though he had repented of that sin, he never felt a sense of peace and forgiveness from God.

The priest had in his parish a woman who was said to experience visions in which she spoke face-to-face with Jesus. The priest was skeptical of this claim, so he decided to test her and see if her visions really came from the Lord. He said, “The next time you speak to Jesus in a vision, as Him what secret sin I committed when I was in seminary.”

*A few days later, the priest visited the woman and asked, "Did Jesus visit you in your dreams?"
"Yes, He did," she said. "Did you ask Him what sin I committed in seminary?" "Yes."
"And what did He tell you?" "He said, 'I don't remember.'"*

Micah 7:18-20 (THE MESSAGE) - *Where is the god who can compare with you— wiping the slate clean of guilt, Turning a blind eye, a deaf ear, to the past sins of your purged and precious people? You don't nurse your anger and don't stay angry long, for mercy is your specialty. That's what you love most. And compassion is on its way to us. You'll stamp out our wrongdoing. You'll sink our sins to the bottom of the ocean. (NO FISHING!) You'll stay true to your word to Father Jacob and continue the compassion you showed Grandfather Abraham— Everything you promised our ancestors from a long time ago.*

Do you want to be Godlike? Is it possible to forgive like God does? To live justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? He says it is, and He provides all you need to accomplish this.

Who is like God?