

Rebellion In The Kingdom

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Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0 : 00] Like we're saying, God willing, we'll be looking at this book over the next few weeks. I'm sure a few detours along the way. And I wonder if I was to ask you, just now I put you in a spot.

I won't, but if I did, how many of us could honestly say we've read through this short book? If we have, how many of us have read through it?

And stop to think much about it. I'll be honest, before I started a few weeks ago, preparing to come here, I'd read it, but I skimmed through it perhaps a few times over the years.

I haven't given much thought to it. Perhaps bar a few main verses later on in the book, first few chapters just skimming through them and carrying on.

But the reality is, if we are to hold what we have in front of us, it is truly the Word of God. And if all that we have here is perfect and all of it is inspired and all of it, as God tells us, is fit to study and fit to teach, then we very begin, begin there quickly to lose our excuses for not taking time to look and to listen to what Micah is saying to us.

[1 : 20] So tonight and the next few weeks, it's going to be a very broad journey, a very, very broad journey over the chapters of Micah. We won't be doing an extensive study in any small parts.

It's a broad overview of each chapter and the broad points of each chapter. And as we look at this, we begin to see in Micah, hopefully begin to appreciate the holiness of God, how ever God is compared to us, how holy God is.

The patience of God appears again and again. We see God wrathfully judging sin. And we see how God is justly qualified and he alone can justly act against sin.

Also throughout this very short book, we see something wonderful. We see a small part of God's wider unfolding plan of salvation.

His plan for redemption, His plan to save His people, His plan which we, of course, this evening are part of. To ignore Micah, we do so at our own detriment.

[2 : 39] The first verse, the first few verses, we see, even from verse one, we see that Micah was a contemporary to Isaiah. His more famous prophet of time, but Micah was there around the same time.

We both mentioned, of course, the same kings as Isaiah had dealings with. Micah mentions that he existed during Verrein. Whereas Isaiah, as we know, was in the royal courts.

Isaiah was up with the elites in many ways. Micah, as we see from his description, Micah, excuse me, of Morachev, he was not.

Morachev, as far as we know, was a small village on the side of a hill 20 miles out of Jerusalem. A farming village, a crofting village, a few sheep, a few farmers.

Nothing of any great, famous, renowned. But yet, Micah was there. Through this previously unknown man, through this small village, God will share his word to the nations.

[3 : 48] Through this man, God will share both the terrifying reality of how seriously God takes his holiness, but also the wonderful promise of the coming Savior.

It's the wonder of God that He uses and chooses with people we would never even think of choosing. A previously unknown, probably shepherd from a small village miles out of Jerusalem, as not the first person perhaps we'd think would be given such incredible messages to whole nations of people.

So we can look at this section, this chapter, roughly in three ways. First of all, looking at the coming judge, or the judge is coming, roughly verses one down to verse four.

So Micah in verse two begins by addressing his audience, we could say. So who are they? Who is the audience he's addressing? While he's addressing a broad audience, as is possible, look with me please to verse two.

It's useful for the next few weeks if we have our Bibles open, we'll jump around with chapters as we go on, God willing, in the next few weeks. In verse two we see who he's writing to, and in Hebrew writing style, they often like to repeat themselves a few times in a sentence for repeat the same word and repeat the same phrase, whereas we'd be quite uncomfortable using the exact same word a few times in many places in Hebrew scripture and New Testament.

[5 : 26] They had no problems and no concerns saying the exact same thing again and again and again, of course usually just to make their point perfectly clear.

Here in the first few verses of chapter one we see Micah clearly hammering home the point is aware as to who this book is addressed to. Hear you peoples, all of you, O'erf, and all that's in it. This message is all encompassing. Even though God was on to address specific nations and to specific nations, Israel and Judah, this initial emphasis on a wider audience should cause us to stop and to think and to listen.

Yes, God is speaking to Israel, yes God is speaking to Judah, but all of the earth pay attention to this. This applies to all of you too. We're not here, of course, in Judah, Israel and in the 6th century BC, we're not with Micah, with a sheepfold, we're not there at the time.

But what God is going to accuse his people of, we will find we ourselves can be accused of much, if not all, of the same things even today.

[6 : 48] Perhaps what we will hear Micah will apply to us far more than we are comfortable to bear with. That's one thing we should say at the start, this is not a comfortable book to read.

It's not a comfortable book to listen to and we shouldn't be comfortable reading it. Micah wasn't written to comfort anyone. It was written to wake the people up and to show them what God is saying to them.

Now again, I'm just passing through here, so in many ways it's easy to say that. I don't know the situation in Carly, but either way it's good for all of us, even speaking to myself personally, to be woken up this often and to listen to what God is saying to us.

In verse 3 we see where God is being described the first time here in verse 3, for behold the Lord is coming out of his place. Here Micah uses the Lord, that capital LRD of course it is talking about Yahweh.

Yahweh is coming out of his place. Micah uses God's personal name, his covenant name, the name God revealed himself with to his people.

[8 : 07] His people are in a covenant, close binding relationship with, this is not just some God, some are saying this, this is your God and he's addressing you.

Of course God had initiated, the covenant with his people at Mount Sinai. Israel had agreed to enter the covenant on God's terms, and of course as part of that covenant both God and Israel had told and said and talked about specific obligations if we can use that word.

For his part God said that Israel, that he would love Israel, he would keep Israel, he would give Israel their land, he would give Israel their saviour, he would protect them physically, spiritually, provide for them physically, spiritually.

And for a summary of what his people promised back, we can turn to the Ten Commandments. Ten Commandments are, we could say Israel's response to the covenant.

God would do all this for you if you do this. God does this, you do that. And of course we know again and again, they broke their side of the covenant.

[9 : 31] Again and again, they didn't keep the Ten Commandments. But again and again, God kept his word. What does God tell them the commandments?

He tells them, do not worship other gods. Don't go after idols, treat the poor well. This is the God who rescued their ancestors from Egypt.

But now this God has come to judge his people, he's come to confront his people and to show them where they've gone badly wrong.

That's what makes what's about to be said in the rest of the chapter even more sad and even more terrifying. Yes, the call to pay attention has gone out to all the earth, but God will lay the charges squarely at the feet of his people, squarely at Israel and Judah.

Verses 3 down to verse 4, we see that this is not going to be some small event, this is not some small issue that's going to be dealt with. He will come down and he will thread on the mountains, thread in the high places.

[10:49] The mountains are going to melt, valleys split open. Quite literally here, but he says thread, he's going to trample on the mountains.

Strong words being used to describe what's about to take place. So really in Micah, we find ourselves in the middle of a courtroom.

As we see from verse 3, the judge is just about to enter to make his presence known and to begin his judgment on the guilty parties.

So that being said, the question hangs in the air, what have they done? If all this is about to take place, what have they done to deserve what we're being threatened about here?

What is the cause of the judgment? That's our second point of the lecture, we have that from verses 5 down to verse 9. The cause of the judgment.

[11:49] In verse 5, we see the capital cities of Israel and Judah be mentioned in Jerusalem and Samaria. What has Israel and Judah done?

What have they done to deserve this coming, punishment of this coming judgment and the answer given, just look at their cities. That tells you all you have to know. Just look at what's happening there and you'll see what the problem actually is.

We find out from 1 Kings 16 that Samaria was built largely by Omri and his sons, men who we know from 1 Kings, who were sympathetic, we could say, with the cult of Baal worship.

The people in Samaria had followed and worshipped foreign gods. They still worshipped gods, still worshipped Yahweh, but they brought in other gods over time. They started worshipping other gods over time.

See that in verse 7, where Micah tells about the destruction of the carved images and the idols that are to be found in Samaria.

[13:05] So that's Samaria. Then in Jerusalem, we find similar issues arising. Micah specifically mentions the high places of Judah at the end of verse 5.

What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? What he's getting at here is, the high places of Judah, the high places where the places they would worship the false gods.

So where is the pinnacle of false god worship? Where is the best place to go and see false gods being worshipped by these people in Jerusalem?

Go there and see for yourselves. And we know that high places, talking about a place where we worship false gods from 2 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 33 and in verse 17, where after right and proper worship has been restored in Israel, we're told, the people, however, continue to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the Lord their God.

But only to the Lord their God. Implying that before this, the high places were used by all the other gods.

[14:29] Micah is clear and concise, that both these places are now worshipping, idols worshipping other gods, but yes, they still worship God, yes, they still claim his name, yes, they still claim to serve him, but in their practice, they've at best mingled in other gods, and at worst forgotten him completely.

One thing to note now that is quite a common feature in the so-called minor prophets, Micah and Hosea, they use vivid and clear imagery, very often very uncomfortable imagery.

Like we said, these are meant to wake people up, and if we read this and we're not uncomfortable, then we're not listening properly.

How does Micah describe the sins of Israel, the sins of Samaria? How does he describe what we've actually done, what it's like we've done?

We see that from the end of verse 7. Talking about all her carved images, all her wages, all her idols were laid to waste, for from the fee of her prostitute, she gathered them, and to the fee of her prostitute, they shall return.

[15:54] Strange phrase, strange, strange phrase, and we're thinking, what's that meaning? Why is that there? Well, we know almost for sure that prostitution was used in the temples of Baal to raise money, to build, to buy better, bigger idols.

God's people were involved in that situation. They were involved in all areas of that situation. And God's saying, you used these awful means to get your money, but time is coming, and all you've gathered up will be turned against you.

And we find ourselves in these verses thinking, what are we thinking? They've known God's mercy, they've known God's love, they've known God's fellowship, and yet here they are being accused of

turning their back on God, and serving idols, and serving other gods.

How can they give their lives back to what they once did? How can they return again and again to these idols who they know fine well have no power whatsoever?

Are we sitting here just now thinking, what are we doing? Are we honest from now on, we started reading over these, and preparing these sermons, and reading these chapters, and I found myself shaking my head, and thinking, what was wrong with these hopeless, weak people?

[17 : 36] It's very hard to go down that path for any length of time without realising that I am here, that we can place ourselves in their place.

We might look back first of all, and judge heavily what these people found themselves doing, worshipping other gods, and going back to the old ways.

Any of us here honestly, any of us here who are Christians right now, believe that we have not found ourselves in a similar position. Some, what in their Christian walk, perhaps even now, were being tempted back to the old ways, giving in to the sins we were rescued so lovingly from in the first place.

These nations had sinned against a God who had come and added with them, and we do the same today. We find ourselves being tempted back to the old paths, to the old patterns we perhaps used to fall into.

The sins that once held us, the sins we were rescued from, we find ourselves falling back into them again. When we do, we find ourselves in a similar position to these folks back in Micah's day.

[18 : 56] They kept turning their back on the God who had never turned his back on them. And the question to leave hanging in the air for just now is, is that it for us?

If we keep going back to our old sins and keep fanning ourselves again and again, just not doing what we know we're supposed to do, not being a person we know we're supposed to be, is there any hope for the Christian in that situation?

Leave that hanging in the air as we carry on. Verses 8 to 9, we begin to see Micah's personal response to his people, his neighbours, his countrymen, his fellow citizens turning their back on God.

And Micah is heartbroken. Lament and wails. I will lament and wail. I will go around stripped. I will lament like a jackal and so on.

It's good to note that in verse 8, every time he says, I will, that's referring to a continuous action. He's not just doing this once.

[20 : 10] I will keep doing this. I will keep wailing. I will keep lamenting. This is now something he's going to do all the time. The situation is so bad, he can't help but keep himself constantly wailing, constantly lamenting, constantly just in distress over the situation.

In verse 9, he laments the damage that Israel's done to itself. That damage looks to be completely incurable. Verse 9, for her wound is incurable.

Even worse than that, the rot has now spread to Jerusalem, the place where God is supposed to be present to the Jewish people, the place where they went to worship Him, the special set-aside place even there.

They're now finding themselves stuck in the same sins. Sin is creeping closer and closer and closer to the door, and the special set-aside place even there, the wound has now spread to...

And we might say, well, there's no hope here. There's nothing. It's incurable. We're done. And that's what Micah gives across.

[21 : 33] There's nothing else I can do. And for Micah, there was nothing he can do. The damage has been done. The punishment is coming. The judgment is coming. And Micah's here stuck in the middle and saying, what do we do?

The question is, is that it? Is that all that there is? Is the situation helped? Is there no hope for the people of God who find themselves back trapped in their old sins?

We all know that that was the truth and none of us... One of us here was the evening would have any hope whatsoever. Micah paints a bleak picture, but he paints a true picture.

A true picture of the destruction that sin causes in our lives. Destruction that sin causes in the lives of God's people.

For the nations of Judah and Israel, God was going to pour out his punishment, as he said he would. See as we go on, the Assyrian army is going to come, is going to conquer these nations.

[22 : 49] We'll see it in verse 16 at the end of our section here. Micah talks about the children of delight being led away. We know that Assyria invaded.

Assyria invaded and led away children. Will that away be young to be slaves? Micah talks in plain simple terms.

There's no time to really go into verses 10 down to verse 16 in general, but that whole section of 10 to 16, and we can see it's poetry, it's really good word play in these verses.

In verses 10 to 16, he mentions a town, and then mentions sign negatives. All the towns he mentions have positive names when you translate them to English, or we translate them to the meaning of the towns, he then gives the opposite.

So gaffe means something like joy. Gaffe means something like misery, because there's no point now. Beth, the Afraaf means to be lifted up off the ground, to tell them to go and roll themselves in the dust.

[23 : 58] So again and again in verses 10 to 16, it's the same word play. All these places are places that are going to face the judgment of God. You look good, you sound good, your name means good things, but in reality folks, judgment's coming.

And God's going to put out his wrath on these places. There's a whole other sermon there for an over day. The Assyrian army is going to invade.

The question is, is that it, was that it for these people? Of course it's not. We know it wasn't, because the Bible carries on, and carries on after that.

Even in the destruction of our cities, even in their exile, even in all that they broke, the covenant of God, God is still going to be ultimately faithful to them.

Yes, they will face a hard and painful time for all they've done against him, but he will not, and he did not abandon them.

[25 : 01] All the backsliding was seen in this book, all the darkness, even this chapter, all the darkness, all the sin, all the misery, all the worshiping of idols. God is bringing all these things together, and we have only he can, to bring about his perfect plan.

To bring about his plan of salvation for us, his people. And God willing as we go through the chapters, we see that plan begin to become clearer and unfold, even in the midst of God's people going wrong again and again.

So what about the Christian? Like I said, the Christian who finds himself trapped in old sins, aren't any sin? See, God does not ever pretend sin doesn't happen.

We saw here that God has promised there will be a destruction because of the sin of the people here.

If we belong to God this evening, God has poured out his wrath, God has poured out his judgment, but it wasn't poured out in our cities, it wasn't poured out in the utmost on us.

[26 : 25] Yes, we might still suffer for our sins in a physical sense, we suffer the consequences of our sin, but we never ever suffer destruction for our sin. God is always perfectly holy, and God has poured out his wrath against our sin, but who did he pour it out onto?

Instead of you or I having to bear the wrath we see in this chapter, God's holy perfect wrath and reaction to our sin, it wasn't ever poured out on us, it's poured out on our Saviour.

So in verse 9 that Micah saw a wound that was incurable, and humanly speaking it was completely incurable. These people had no hope this army, this massive army, would invade and wipe the memory of Him off the face of the earth, and that's it, humanly speaking that's it.

The people of Israel suffered for their sin, but God not abandoned them. In fact through these sinful people, God would provide His Saviour.

Like we said we may well suffer in a real sense for our sin, but the Christians here ultimately we know our eternal punishment, our eternal just wrath from God has been due for us, it's already been borne by our Saviour.

[28 : 04] This is not just nice words to get us through the week, this is reality for us. It's so unbelievable, so beyond what we can even begin to imagine. We deserve all this anger, all this wrath, because of our Saviour we see none of it.

He saw all of it, we see none of it. In this opening chapter of Micah we see that God takes sin seriously.

He takes sin so seriously. We see even in Micah that it's possible for those who worship God and who know God and who serve God to fall into sin as I know as we all know how easy it is for us to

fall into sin.

We see the hopelessness of that situation. Nothing can be done to save us from that situation. But we also see in the background, the fact that chapter one is not the start and the end of the whole book shows us there's more to come.

If Micah ended in chapter one, well then, we have no hope for the rest of our lives, they're mindless evening. Micah carries on. Yes, God will visit his people in judgement.

[29 : 26] He will bring them through. There is more coming, there is hope, and for us this evening, for Christians we know that hope. To God's people in the Old Testament, that hope was there but it was veiled in various ways.

We knew something was coming or someone was coming, but it wasn't clear who or what that would be in all its senses. Us here this evening, we know our Saviour. We can read all about our Saviour.

We can serve our Saviour and call them by His name. We have never judged the people of God in the Old Testament for our unfaithfulness and for our sin.

Let's always place ourselves in their footsteps and see that we're no better than them. But they trusted in a Saviour to come. That Saviour has come and He has saved His people.

We know that in all these things, God is working His plan out. As we look forward, we'll go to the next few chapters, see if at God makes for sin more clear.

[30 : 37] We also see that God begins to build a clearer and clearer, a more incredible picture of the great plan of salvation He has for His people. Like we said, if we took this chapter in isolation and that was the end of Micah then, we will leave here with no hope whatsoever, no reason to hope.

Micah doesn't end here. It carries on, carries on and carries on to a glorious conclusion where God works out His plan of salvation.

Reality as Christians is only as we realise the seriousness of our sin. We see more and more the glory and beauty of our Saviour.

We see the seriousness of our sin and stop there when we're wrong. Recognise that, yes. See that, yes. But then always keep moving past that to seeing, my sin is awful, I am miserable, I know I'm stuck in a sin, it's awful.

But if we're here tonight as the Lord's, we have a wonderful Saviour. That's not just something we're saying, just for the sake of it.

[31 : 50] We're saying, God willing next week in the morning as we look at Ephesians, we'll see that more clearly in Jesus, in Him alone. There is abundance of mercy and grace and forgiveness, more we can ever begin to understand.

Now that's good news for Christians here just now. Our sin, despite how often we get it wrong, that we know of it ultimately because our salvation comes from God, and it is true and sure hope that He has forgiven us.

For those here this evening who as of yet are not Christians, then my honest, genuine question to you is, where is your hope?

For Christians we sin and get it wrong again and again, and we get it wrong again and again and again, but we know that ultimately our salvation is secure because we trust Jesus.

Our salvation is secure because we know that God has forgiven us. Through our Saviour we're forgiven.

[32 : 58] If as of yet you're not Christian, you stand this evening before God with no forgiveness. Your sins still hang over you, unforgiving.

Your sins and the punishment they deserve are still following you every second of every day. Until you come and come to Jesus, until you come to Him and cry out for forgiveness, these sins and the punishment of that sin will never leave you.

Okay, this is not just nice words, this is real. This is so serious, and it's hard often to convey that in this situation where we're used to coming here and going home, this is real stuff.

This is life or death. Don't waste an hour day, an hour and an hour without knowing Jesus, the only one who can save you from your sin.

The Christians here this evening, God looks on us. What does he see? Does the foolish look at this? What does God see when he sees you and sees I?

[34 : 07] He sees us as clothed in the perfection of his Son. If you're outside of Jesus this evening, that perfection is not yours.

Like Micah saw this incurable wound, humanly speaking, you cannot save yourself. Stop trying. Come and trust the one who can save you, who is able to save you.

Speak to one of the elders, speak to a Christian friend, speak to me, but don't let his chance pass you by. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Oh Lord God, we thank you again as we come to Your Word.

We thank you that even in these challenging passages, Lord, that You are certain, even when we see You in all Your wrathful justice, we see You in Your holiness, in Your perfect justice, Lord, we may fear and tremble rightfully at these things.

We thank You, Lord, You are not an unforgiving God. Lord, You are God who forgives. You are a God who has closed your people. You are a God who has provided a way of salvation.

[35 : 16] We thank You this evening that we are not bound for eternal destruction. But our sins and the punishment of our sins, they are not bound to hang over us.

But Lord, that You have given us a Savior. Lord, that He came willingly out of His love for You and of His obedience to You, that He willingly came, lived that perfect life and died that necessary death.

We do pray as we carry on looking at these tough passages. You would open our minds and open our hearts. Lord, You forgive me for everything I said tonight. That was incorrect. Let me give you praise again that the power is not in whoever stands here.

The power is in You and in Your living Word. As we come to sing our final item of praise this evening, help us to do so, of hearts and minds full of joy, understanding that You are the God who is merciful.

You are the God who deserves our praise. You are the God who has cast our sins into the depths of the sea, never to be seen again. That's what we sing to Your precious name, say.

[36 : 22] Amen.