

Micah Chapter 3

Verses 1-4: In beginning the second oracle, Micah first addressed Israel's corrupt rulers (as in 2:1-2), who should be aware of injustice. Yet their conduct toward the poor was like the butchering of animals (verses 2-3). Therefore, when judgment came and they cried for help, God didn't answer (verse 4).

Micah 3:1 "And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; [Is it] not for you to know judgment?"

In the second division of his prophecy Micah protests against the evil influences exercised upon the people in high places. The princes, the prophets, and the priests, to whom their interests were confided, were guilty of wrong, oppression, and robbery.

What is just and right to be done by men and what sentence is to be passed in courts of judicature, in cases brought before them and not only to know, in a speculative way, what is equitable. But to practice it themselves, and see that it is done by others.

And when they duly considered this, they would be able to see and own that what the prophet from the Lord would now charge them with, or denounce upon them was according to truth and justice.

Micah is condemning the sins of those in authority. They should have led their people in the ways of God; instead they led them into sin. Leaders do have a great authority, but with that prestige and authority, go great responsibilities. They, above all the rest of the people, should have known better.

Micah 3:2 "Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;"

The judges instead of fulfilling the obligations of their office, whereby they should be "for the people to God-ward," perpetrated the most flagrant cruelty upon them.

Micah compares it to the process of preparing food, in which every part of the animal, even to the bones, is utilized. So the judges robbed the people until there was nothing left to them.

This speaks of evil rulers who are out for only themselves. They are not like the good shepherd who cares for the sheep. They have skinned them at every opportunity. This is an expression used when you cheat someone in a business deal as well.

Micah 3:3 "Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron."

Like cannibals, flay them alive, and then eat their flesh. This signifies, as before, devouring their substance, only expressed in terms which still more set forth their savageness, inhumanity, barbarity, and cruelty.

Did with them as cooks do; not only cut the flesh off the bones and into slices, but break the bones themselves to get out the marrow. Then chop them small, that they may have all the virtue that is in them to make their soup and broth the richer.

By which is signified that these wicked and avaricious rulers took every method to squeeze the people, and get all their wealth and riches into their hands, that they might have in a more riotous and luxurious manner.

This does not mean they were practicing cannibalism, as this is not to be taken literally. This just means that they treated them like animals for their own personal use, instead of like people. They had no regard for their people.

Micah 3:4 "Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings."

"Then" (i.e., in the day of retribution), then shall they call upon me, saith the Lord. But I will not hear; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. And that because they hated knowledge, and received not the fear of the Lord, but abhorred my counsel and despised my correction.

Then shall it be too late to knock when the door shall be shut, and too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice" (commination service). So also Isaiah declared:

Isaiah 1:15 "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

John 9:31 "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

James 2:13 "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

They cry out to the LORD, but He has closed His ears to them. They showed no mercy, and they will receive no mercy.

Verses 5-7: False prophets (2:6-11), also stood guilty before the Judge because they misled the people, prophesying peace when they were fed, but predicting war when they were not (verse 5). Like the rulers, they too were motivated by greed. Therefore, having blinded others, they would be struck with blindness and silence (verses 6-7).

Micah 3:5 "Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him."

The concluding statement that the false prophets declare war against those who do not put into their mouth indicates the meaning of the former expression, namely, "they say peace to those who feed and bribe them."

The Hebrew word (nashak), which is rendered "bite," is strictly applied to serpents, to "an adder in the path," and is therefore especially appropriate to the false and lying nature of the prophets.

Who do not give them what they ask, or do not feed them according to their desire. Do not keep a good table for them, and cram and pamper them. But neglect them, and do not provide well for them. These they threaten with one calamity or another that shall befall them. And endeavor to set their neighbors against them, and even the government itself, and do them all the mischief they can by defamation and slander.

The following 2 Scriptures that Jesus spoke are a very good explanation of this.

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

Matthew 15:14 "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

This next Scripture tells us exactly what becomes of these evil leaders.

2 Peter 2:1 "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

God does not overlook this sinful prophet. He will be punished.

Micah 3:6 "Therefore night [shall be] unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them."

Darkness, uncertainty, perplexity, and heavy troubles shall be to you prophets. You shall see your predictions so fully confuted, that you shall no more pretend to have a vision, or dare to foretell anything. As they shall have no light or revelation from heaven; so dark days or dismal calamities shall overtake them, as a just punishment for their frauds and impostures.

Or if the prophet be considered as addressing the people, the meaning of the verse is: Since ye have given ear to such prophets, and rejected the true ones, the time shall come when there shall be no true vision among you and no divine counsel to direct you; but ye shall be involved in darkness and uncertainty without knowing what course to take.

This is speaking of prophets who are not true prophets. They are not ambassadors to carry the Lord's Word, but their own. They prophesy for their own personal gain. They will no longer receive any messages from God. There will be a famine of the Word of God in their lives.

The little light they had from God will no longer shine. Their light will go completely out.

Zechariah 13:3 "And it shall come to pass, [that] when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth."

Micah 3:7 "Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for [there is] no answer of God."

"Cover their lips": They will be put to shame and will show this shame openly by covering their lips, which was an oriental gesture to indicate shame and mourning.

Seers, generally, could pray and ask for answers from God for the people. When their communication with God is cut off, they are no longer blessed with answers for the people. "Covering their lips" would be a sign of mourning for their inability to speak for God.

Micah 3:8 "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."

Micah, in contrast to the false prophets, spoke by the power of God's Holy Spirit (2:7). Therefore, his message was authoritative and true.

Micah is defending his own ability to speak for God in this. He is saying, "I am not one of those that God has cut off". Micah speaks the Words that the LORD has put into his mouth. He is actually a mouthpiece for God.

These messages do not come from the heart of Micah, but from God, through Micah. Even though the declarations of Jacob's sins are coming from the mouth of Micah, they are actually coming from God.

Verses 9-12: All ruling classes are guilty: rulers judged for reward (verses 9-11a), priests taught for hire (verse 11b), prophets divined for money (verse 11c). All the while, they were self-deceived into thinking the Lord would give them favor because they identified themselves with Him. Consequently, the nation would be destroyed (fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.).

Micah 3:9 "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity."

This address to the great men shows the prophet's courage and impartiality.

“That abhor judgment”, who do not love to pass a right judgment in matters that come before you because you make no advantage to yourselves by so doing. But covet to have large bribes given you, to pervert equity and make wrong decisions.

Again, he speaks against the leaders of the people. This is not just to the prophets, but to the spiritual leaders of each family. They should be a standard that is lifted up for all of their people to follow, but they are not.

"Pervert all equity" means they are not keeping God's laws the way they were written, but are changing them to please themselves.

Micah 3:10 "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity."

They acquire money for the erection of splendid buildings by spoliation and robbery, not stopping short of murder. So also Habakkuk (Micah 2:12), denounces the king of Babylon for the bloody wars with which he obtained wealth for the enlargement of the city.

This is just saying that they grew by the bloodshed of others. Whether this is literal, or is speaking of injustices, I cannot say. They used Jerusalem for the promotion of their evil.

Deuteronomy 27:25 "Cursed [be] he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen."

Micah 3:11 "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, [Is] not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us."

Every function is carried out by judges, priests, and prophets through bribery, and yet they claim and count upon the protection of Jehovah. They rely for safety upon the presence of the sacred buildings. They cry, “The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these!” “Is not the Lord among us?”

Isaiah contrasts in scathing terms the profession of holiness with the vicious life as seen in Jerusalem and likens the city, with its rulers, to Sodom (Micah 1:10-15).

This is speaking of gross abuse of their authority. Their judgment is easily bought, because they are judging for money.

"The priests teach for hire" is speaking of ministers who minister to no one, but those who can pay. They are leaders for what they can get for themselves out of it. The ridiculous thing is they expect God to bless them for this. They believe they are a privileged few, who will not be judged of God.

Matthew 7:15 “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

To be a spiritual leader of the people is a call of God, it is not a vocation to make a living with.

Micah 3:12 "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed [as] a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."

Micah declared this sentence of Divine judgment with an intrepidity that was long remembered by the Jews. More than a century later the elders of the land, speaking in justification of the course taken by Jeremiah, used as a precedent the example of Micah.

Jeremiah 26:17-19: "Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying," "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest." "Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls."

So also, in after-days, the doom of Jerusalem was pronounced by our Lord: "The days will come when there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

The blame for the destruction of Jerusalem can actually be laid at the feet of these evil leaders. For the crimes of the priests, and prophets, and rulers, the destruction came from God.

Zion is, many times, speaking of the church. There is an extensive lesson about the shepherds who lead the sheep astray (in Ezekiel chapter 34).

This also is speaking of the temple in Jerusalem which is destroyed in the Babylonian attack. The mountain of the house is speaking of the temple.

God had moved out of the temple, because of their sins.

Micah Chapter 3 Questions

1. Who is this addressed to?
2. Micah is _____ the sins of those in authority.
3. With prestige and authority, go great _____.
4. What is verse 2 speaking of?
5. Does verse 3 mean they were practicing cannibalism?
6. It means they treated the people like _____.

7. Who does verse 5 say made the people err?
8. What happens, when the blind lead the blind?
9. Who is verse 6 speaking of?
10. They prophesy for their own _____.
11. Why will the seers be ashamed?
12. What was "covering their lips" a sign of?
13. Who was Micah speaking of in verse 8?
14. Micah is actually a _____ for God.
15. Who is verse 9 speaking against?
16. What were their special sins?
17. How were they abusing their authority?
18. Who is actually to blame for the destruction of Jerusalem?
19. Where, in Ezekiel, do we read about the shepherds who lead the sheep astray?
20. What country destroyed Jerusalem?