

Kings and Prophets 15-04-03b

Let's formally begin now our look at the Old Testament prophet Micah. We are looking at him in the context of his contemporaries. We've reviewed thematically at least Jonah, Hosea, and Amos.

And Micah is also a prophet speaking in this historical context. And the prominent theme in Micah is judgment. It is judgment.

We've of course noticed that judgment is prominent in the other books, but their focus is looking at judgment in the context of covenant relationship, looking at judgment in the context of God's overarching plan and purpose for both Jews and Gentiles, looking at judgment in the context of the responsibility to be fruitful and to fulfill God's purposes in the earth. And judgment comes because of failing to fulfill the purpose. Judgment comes from failing to sustain relationship.

Judgment comes from failing to be aligned with God's historical and overarching plan. Failing to, as they used to say, orientate yourself. One of my favorite examples of a non-word, orientate.

It's even in dictionaries now. If I want to get aligned with some reference, I will orient myself. I will orient my compass to true north.

I'm not going to orientate my compass. Just because orientation is a word doesn't mean that orientate is a verb. Well, anyway.

But this is helpful because think about this in terms of application now. We've reviewed these four different perspectives. Right? Right? Four different perspectives.

Same people of God. Same God in heaven. Same overall stuff going on.

But with emphasis on relationship. With emphasis on purpose. With emphasis on the grand scheme of history.

And now with an emphasis on judgment versus deliverance. The issue of who's going to be judged and who's going to be delivered. Most commentaries, when you look at Micah, they say, well, the theme of Micah is judgment.

Yes. That's a big part of it, but that's not all of it. Because scattered throughout Micah are these constant refrains of deliverance.

It is judgment and deliverance. So this is important to note when we think about application. Application.

As I look at my own life in the quiet early morning hours or in the quiet late evening hours. Or if

I pause at the middle of the day and take a break in the midst of things. Preferably.

Hear me now. Preferably all three. Early morning hours.

Late evening hours. And in the middle of the day. Why do I say that? Evening and morning.

And at noon. Will I pray and cry aloud. And he shall hear my voice.

Psalms 55, 17. Evening. And morning.

And at noon. How many times a day did Daniel pray? How many times? You can say it out loud. Thrice.

Or Tlaite, if you're going to say it in Arabic. Three times. So this is not idle stuff that's in the Bible just for entertainment purposes.

Evening and morning and at noon. Daniel three times a day. The Lord Jesus characterized by prayer.

In the early morning hours. In the late evening hours. And probably in the middle of the day as well.

Although we don't have a specific record of that. So when we do this. As I am sure we're all going to redouble our efforts to do.

If we're not already. And some of you are. God bless you for that.

But as we do. What do we pray about? What do we think about? Well, here's a fresh. Piece of ground we can cover as we reflect in the morning.

As we meditate in the evening. As we evaluate in the middle of the day. Let me look at myself.

From these perspectives. How am I doing? Relationship wise. With God.

Through Christ. What are the components of that relationship? What are the sustaining elements of that relationship? What is the communication mechanism? To and from. What is the substance? What is the meat of that? What makes it go? What energizes it? What enables it? Whose presence.

Creates the connection between me and God. How is that connection originally established? And once the bridge was built. Jesus handed the keys to that bridge.

To someone else. Capital S, right? So we can think about that. I'm going to think about which prophet in that connection.

Relationship goes to? Hosea. Gomer. Lo-Ruhamah.

Lo-Ami. Remember that? I can think about this. I can turn this to my advantage.

It's the word of God. It's alive and powerful. It splits us open.

And exposes the thoughts and intents of the heart. I want my thoughts and intents exposed. Because I want to eradicate the bad ones.

And cultivate the good ones. Cultivation. Fruit.

Accomplishment of purpose. What aspect is that? Here we go with the ox. The burden bearer.

Fruitfulness. Whose Old Testament gospel is that in the mind of prophets? Amos. Shepherd of Tekoa.

Present your body a living sacrifice. He's the shepherd of those sheep that go down for temple sacrifice. He's the tender of the oxen that go down there to service.

As Holborn offerings and fellowship offerings. He's the guy that checks the figs. He's a fig cultivator.

The fruitful tree that Jesus is looking for. And does not find. And curses.

And it withers. Which reminds me of coming judgment. Who's the judgment prophet? That's going to be Micah.

There's deliverance. But there's judgment. There is a choice.

God confronts his people with a choice. Of restoration or judgment. And Micah is probably the last of these four.

And setting that in the overarching context. Because it's not just about me. It's not even just about my relationship with God.

And my relationship with each other. There is an overarching eagle's eye view. The Jonah context.

Where there are people in another city. Who are going to be affected by what I say and what I do. Even years to come in the future.

Somebody is going to think back. Somebody is going to remember. Somebody has been affected.

God can use us in the larger plan. We are preparing for things in the future. That eye hasn't seen and ear hasn't heard.

The things that God reveals to us in prospect. And in suggested form. To the extent that we can even grasp.

That there is something coming. This is the big picture. It's set my life in a historical context.

Set my life in a theological context. Set my life in a prophetic context. Set my life in a people of God context.

Where am I dispensationally? Where am I as body of Christ? Where am I in terms of citizenship in the new Jerusalem? Where am I in terms of inheritance? Where am I in terms of reflecting the glory of God? Big picture stuff. Jonah. The dove.

And the eagle flying even higher than that. So these are things that can actually help us. Let's use them.

Let's avail ourselves of the things that we learn from these books. So we begin now the fourth of this wonderful set of prophets. In this 8th century BC context.

And that's Micah. Micah. Micah is probably short for Mikael.

Mi means who. And ka means like. Who is like? This could be Micah or Micah as we've seen him.

It could be Mikael who is like God. But you notice that the theocratic element is left off. And it's just who is like.

And it's abbreviated. This is like saying Sam instead of Samuel. Or Shem instead of Shmuel.

And the idea here is what is God going to be like to you? Is he going to be El? Remember how we saw the shift of divine name in Amos? Where thus says the Lord. Versus the Lord God of hosts. Versus the God of hosts.

How personal and how close is God in terms of that message? Are you on the positive side or on the negative side? Is he going to be the God of judgment? Or is he going to be the Lord of deliverance? Well here, Micah, it's as though that last part is left off. Is it going to be El, the formal God that executes judgment in objective, impersonal righteousness? Or is it going to be Yah is his name. I Am is his name.

The personal covenant name. The name of deliverance. Bondage removed.

Taken out of Egypt. Taken to the land of promise. Given an inheritance.

God says, when the people ask who it is that's doing this, you tell it, I Am. I Am has sent you to lead the people out and in. And Yeshua is going to finish what Moses starts.

Remember that? So who is God going to be? Well this is Micah and you don't get the last part. Is it going to be judgment or is it going to be salvation? Is he going to be Micah Yah or Micah El? So the name is common in ancient Israel. There are nine different people named as either Micah or Micah Yah in the Old Testament.

There's a guy back in the days of the judges. There's a guy in the family of Reuben mentioned in Chronicles. One of Saul's grandsons has this name.

You find that out in both Chronicles and Samuel. There's a Levite in the family of Asaph in 1 Chronicles 9. One of the Kohathites has this name. Josiah sends a messenger with this name.

And you remember the prophet in the time of Ahab. Micah the prophet, remember him? In the days of Nehemiah there's going to be a guy named Micah. Micah in Nehemiah chapter 10.

And this guy is mentioned by name only two places in Scripture. Micah 1.1 and as we will see in an upcoming study, Jeremiah chapter 26 verse 18. Jeremiah says in 26.18 of his book, Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah and spoke to all the people of Judah saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple shall be like the bare hills of the forest.

Like a denuded forest. Have you ever seen that place in Russia where the meteorite hit and it just flattened the trees for square miles around? That's the image, that's the picture. Jeremiah quotes Micah in 26.18. Because in Jeremiah's day, where's the northern kingdom? As they say in Oklahoma, Gaon.

G-A-W-N, Gaon. It's gone. Jeremiah's last 40 years of Judah, right? So, Micah.

Who is like the Lord? Who is like God? Well, as I said, this book is going to be about judgment and restoration. I tell you that in advance so that we can be watching for it because we are going to have to cruise through it rather quickly. One of the things to note of the four cherub faces, of the four gospel images that we talked about in the first session tonight, which one did we assign to Micah? It's the lion, right? We had the face of a man, that's going to be Hosea, that's relationship, that's personal.

We had the ox, the burden bearer, which is Amos. We had the eagle associated with the dove, associated with Jonah, and that leaves us the lion. Now, what does it tell us in Psalm 100? What is the most common image in the Bible, really, for the people of God? In Psalm 100, Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, He is God.

It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves. Then what? We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. I am sent, Jesus said, to whom? The lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The sheep are scattered, Jesus laments, and they have no shepherd. The people are like sheep without a shepherd. Sheep, sheep, my sheep hear my voice.

They know me, they follow me. I am the door of the sheep. I guard the fold.

Over and over again, God's people are sheep. Now, sheep, shepherd, sheep, lion. Lion, sheep, shepherd, sheep.

What was one of David's earliest exploits that we know of in his career? He delivered the sheep

from a lion and from a bear. The shepherd delivered the sheep from a lion. Your adversary, the devil, roams the earth like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Resist him, said Fasten the Faith, and so on. Psalm 23 famously says, The Lord is my shepherd, I will not lack. It makes me lie down in green pastures beside the still waters, restores my soul, and so on.

The Lord is my shepherd. When the lion comes, the lion of the tribe of Judah, is he going to be a lion in protecting the people as king from outside invasion? He is going to be a lion to the enemies and he's going to be a shepherd internally. Or is he going to be a lion internally and devour the recalcitrant sheep who are muddying the water? You remember those that are knocking each other out of the way and then nobody can drink and that.

So there's a double significance here when you look at the lion. Is the lion going to be defending the people looking outward? Putting a hedge around the people and basically being the Lord Jesus as a deliverer as he is when he rules the nations with a rod of iron. That's the lion of the tribe of Judah.

That's, remember Richard the Lionheart. The people of Britain in those days weren't afraid that Richard the Lionheart was going to come take advantage of them. They were proud of him.

He's the Lionheart. He's going to expand our prosperity and pursue our interests. He's our king.

We love him. Richard the Lionheart. He's brave.

He's fearless. He's good King Richard instead of evil King John or whatever it is. It depends on whose side you're on.

So the lion. But oddly enough in the book of Micah what we have over and over again are references to the sheep. And before we get in we'll see these in context.

But look for example at chapter 2 verse 12. I will surely assemble all of you O Jacob. I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.

I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture. They shall make a loud noise because of the people. The one who breaks open will come up before them.

They will break out, pass through the gate and go out. Their king will pass before them with the Lord at their head. What does that mean? We'll see it when we see it in context.

But here's this sheep image. Look at chapter 3 verses 2 and 3. You who hate good and love evil, who strip the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, flay the skin from them, break their bones, chop them in pieces like meat in the pot, like flesh in the cauldron. And these are the sheep of chapter 2 that have been taken advantage of.

Thus says the Lord, verse 5, concerning the prophets who make my people stray. All we like sheep have gone astray, turned everyone to his own way, and the leaders are implicated as agents of this scattering. Look at chapter 4 verse 6. In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast, those whom I have afflicted, I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation.

I will assemble these that have been scattered like sheep, is the idea. And again, we'll see that in its context. Chapter 5 verse 4. He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall abide.

Now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, and this one shall be peace. Flip over a few more pages to chapter 7 verse 14. Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your heritage, who dwell solitarily in a woodland in the midst of Carmel.

Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in days of old. By the way, you remember, ironically, we said that Amos is associated with the ox. And you remember, that ought to be the service and the fruitfulness and the bearing of the burdens, accomplishing God's will, being the tractor of agricultural fruitfulness.

And instead, what is the condemnation in Amos? You remember, I think it's in chapter 4, when he says, you cows of Bashan, you fat heifers that aren't plowing, and you're not doing any of the purposeful work, you're satisfying yourselves. So, but Bashan was a place of rich pasture, as was Gilead. And he says the flock will return there and be restored.

So what is going to happen to the flock? What is it going to be? The lion turning inward to consume them, as the lion roaring in that first part of Amos over the prey, and you get the ear and a couple of broken bones out of his mouth. Remember in the next chapter, the remnant. Is that going to be the relationship of the lion to the sheep? Or is it going to be this protective, beneficial environment of prosperity, growth, and fruitfulness? That's the issue in Micah, judgment or deliverance.

And as is the case so often, there is a remnant. According to the election, the choosing of grace. By the way, how does grace choose the remnant? So take a population list and throw a dart at it and say, okay, the dart hit this guy, I choose him for deliverance.

Throw the dart, there's a random individual, I choose them. This is the way the reformed Calvinistic view is. The election of grace is just God's unknowable, inscrutable, I don't know why he did it, I don't know why he picked me, but I'm sure glad he did.

That's the standard Calvinist refrain. They've got songs to that effect. I don't know why he did, but I'm sure glad he did.

I know that I'm just as depraved and useless and hopeless. What is the distinguishing factor for the election of grace? The choosing by God's grace. What is the basis? Does God have no basis or an inscrutable basis? Or is there a reason that God preserves a remnant? In the days of

Elijah, when he got so discouraged, God says, I've still got a remnant.

I've got 7,000 that I've chosen according to the inscrutable election of my grace. Is that what he says? I have 7,000 that what? Have not bowed the knee to Baal. That's the basis for being the remnant.

Are you a sheep? Are you a goat? Before there's ever a sorting out, somebody decided I'm going through the sheep gate. I'm going through the goat gate. I'm going to clothe myself with the sheep skin, or I'm going to clothe myself with the goat skin.

Interesting to me that Jesus is so often remembered as the Lamb of God, and Satan and all of his worshippers like that. Bahometh, is that how you say it? The goat head is a symbol of Satan. Sheep, goats.

Sheep, goats. There is a reason why people are elect. Why was Judah preserved when the Northern Kingdom went out? Hezekiah, turning to God, because you have turned, you are spared.

His personal life was emblematic of the people. Turned his face to the wall and wept. God says, I've seen your tears.

You have a kind of turning here. I grant you 15 more years. And in the same way, he grants Judah, who is under the same condemnation as Israel, but there is a turning down there.

There has always been a remnant in Judah. Going back to the days of Jehoshaphat, with all of those teachers going through the land, most of the prophets that God sends are faithful men like Amos, like Micah, like Hosea. These individuals who come from the South.

Did I say that right about Hosea? I might have messed up. But I know that Amos is from down there. We know that Micah is from down there.

In fact, Micah and Amos, their hometowns are 20 miles apart. Tekoa and the town that Jeremiah quotes, his hometown, it says in chapter 1, verse 1 of Micah, where he is from. And that town is in southern Judah.

It is, somehow I got to Obadiah, that's why I couldn't read it. Moresheth or Moresheth Gath. The full name of the town is Moresheth Gath, as we will see later in this book.

Well, let me give you one quick thing here. We've got three minutes left tonight. And let me give you a quick observation.

One of the structural components of Micah's prophecy. What's the theme? The sort of double-edged theme, the two-sided coin theme? Judgment versus deliverance. Who's going to be judged? Who's going to be delivered? Is it going to be Micaiah or Michael to you? Who is like the Lord? Who is like God? Who is like God in judgment? Who is like the Lord in deliverance? That's kind of the memory aid here.

Micah. And he brings a court case. This is classic courtroom language in chapter 1. The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, the capital cities.

These are the heads. These are the responsible parties. This is the leadership.

Hear all you people. Listen, O earth, and all that is in it. Let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple.

Behold, the Lord is coming out of His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.

All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Look at Samaria. What are the high places of Judah? Look at Jerusalem.

Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field, places for planting a vineyard. I will pour down her stones into the valley. I will uncover her foundations.

Her carved images will be beaten in pieces, and all her pay as a harlot shall be burned with the fire. Her idols I will lay desolate, for she gathered it from the pay of a harlot. They shall return to the pay of a harlot.

Notice we have the harlot image like we did in Hosea, but it's a different perspective. This is judgment falling from an objective courtroom witness, God, the judge of all the earth, who has the authority and the power to both judge and to execute sentence. You have the same harlot idea from the covenant relationship standpoint in Hosea.

Therefore I will wail and howl. I will go stripped and naked. I will make a wailing like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches, for her wounds are incurable, for it has come to Judah.

It has come to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem. Now the my is capitalized there, and I think this is actually Micah speaking. He is from Judah, and he says I am going to wail, I am going to mourn, I am sorrowful that it has come to this, that God is not only going to judge the northern kingdom that has richly deserved it for so long, but it is coming to Judah as well.

Now look at this next section real quickly here. Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all in Beth Aphra, roll yourself in the dust. Pass by in naked shame, you inhabitant of Shaphir, the inhabitant of Zanan, does not go out.

Beth Azel mourns, its place to stand is taken away from you. For the inhabitants of Maroth pined for good, but disaster came down from the Lord to the gate of Jerusalem. O inhabitant of Lachish, Lachish, harness the chariot to the swift steeds, she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion.

For the transgressions of Israel were found in you, this is in Judah, the transgressions of Israel

in the north have been found in you as well. Therefore you shall give presents to Moresheth Gath, that's Micah's hometown, one of the reasons he is weeping. The houses of Aqzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.

I will yet bring an heir to you, O inhabitant of Moresheth, the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam. Now, you can understand verse 16, make yourself bald and cut off your hair because of your precious children, enlarge your baldness like an eagle, for they shall go from you into captivity. You know the mourning customs of self-disfiguration, whether it's sackcloth and ashes or whatever.

Last verse kind of makes sense. What about all of this between? What about verses 10 through 15? And it mentions these towns and these kind of strange references. You got horses, you got coming in and going out, you got rolling in the dust and that.

What is that all about? When you read it, it's just like Charlie Brown's teacher, right? I mean, something bad is happening, but it seems very vague. Well, next time we will see that there are 12 of these cities. These cities, historically, we have some extra-biblical record of the excursion that the Assyrians make as they attack down the western edge of Judah through what had formerly been Philistia, coming down on that side.

And along their route of march are these 12 towns. This is what is between the Assyrians up in the northern kingdom, already having plowed through there and coming down to Judah to accost the capital city. These are 12 towns directly in their path.

Archaeology has not found all of these towns, but what we have here in the prophecy of Micah is a specific statement about each one. Each one of them is significant. Each one of them is poetic.

Each one of them is... This is the introduction to the entire prophecy right here. And everything flows out of this. That's what we're going to look at next time.

It is really, really interesting why the prophecy opens with this declaration. It is the charge, and then it is the sentence. They are charged.

They are found guilty. Micah weeps over it. And here is the declaration of the sentence.

Is this sentence going to be executed or is this sentence going to be suspended? That's where our historical context for this book is going to help us out. But these 12 towns, highly significant. And we'll decipher these seemingly cryptic statements about each town next time.

But we have to close for tonight in a word of prayer. Again, one thing to bring out of our study tonight is what does this mean to me? These things have been written for our instruction. And these perspectives, these angles of analysis of our own life, whether it is in relationship, whether it is in fruitfulness, whether it is in covenant obedience, whether it is in whether or not we are in line for deliverance or judgment, are helpful.

We can turn our own lives in the light of these four perspectives and examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith. Clean up areas where maybe we're doing well in three and we're bad in one. Maybe we're good in one and bad in three.

But it is a clarifying lens on our vertical standing before God in terms of His righteousness and His expectation for us as His people in Christ so that we can fulfill our horizontal responsibilities to one another in justice, in fruitfulness, in preparation for all that God has for us now and in days to come. So it's wonderfully helpful in terms of insight into our own lives. Let's close here in a word of prayer and we'll pick up here in Micah next time.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the power that it so visibly manifests as we spend time looking at it, as it is wielded in the hands of Your Holy Spirit to enlighten us, to encourage us, to motivate us, and to chasten us when that is needed. We pray that we will benefit individually and collectively from the things that we've seen tonight and that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work as a result.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.