

Kings and Prophets 15-04-17a

This is Friday, the 17th of April, 2015. Tomorrow would be my grandmother's 111th birthday. We continue our study in the Kings and Prophets.

We're looking at the fourth in a series of prophets that ministered at this time, the prophet Micah. Having looked at Jonah, having looked at Hosea, having looked at Amos, we're looking at Micah. And we're going to resume tonight in Micah 2, verse 6. Micah 2, verse 6. Let's take a moment, as is our custom, to go to the Lord in prayer, ensure that we're prepared for the ministry of God's Holy Spirit to help us all understand and benefit from this portion of God's Word.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank You for this day. We thank You for the ways that You have watched over us and blessed us in this past week, the seen and unseen elements of Your plan that have worked together to produce opportunities for us to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to learn and grow by the application of the things that we have seen in Your Word in these preceding weeks and months. We thank You for Your patience with us as we struggle to prevail over our fallen flesh and our corrupt nature, the powers that are at work in the world around us to deflect us and to distract us and to try to keep us from realizing who we are and why we're here.

We thank You for Your Word and the light that it shines in this darkness. We thank You for this particular portion of it, and we ask Your blessing on us as we study the book of Micah, that as we look at it together, Your Holy Spirit will impress it on each heart in a way that is meaningful and helpful, not only for our understanding but even more so for our pursuit of service and obedience and that experience of living in the light of Your Word that prepares us for the ages that are to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, we've seen that as each of these prophets ministers in the waning days of the Northern Kingdom, they are all prophesying about God's extreme displeasure. He's pretty much put out with the Northern Kingdom.

They are still staggering along, having survived the likes of Ahab and Jezebel, and just a downward spiral of kings. No dynasty can last more than two, three, or four kings before somebody gets murdered, somebody is taken out, and it just seems like somebody worse takes his place. But remember, the people in the North are not hapless victims of a series of bad kings.

They get the kings they deserve. And this is particularly apropos to remember as we look at our own government and realize that it isn't going to do any good to elect good people to preside over a population of generally bad people. You know, that's wrong thought.

It's not going to do any good to elect bad people to preside over a population of generally bad people. It's wrong, it's bad people. You know, that's wrong thought.

It's not going to do any good to elect bad apropos, in the light of the fact that we are a representative democracy, and people tend to elect the ones that they like, and so we're even more culpable. But God would give and raise to power kings that were a reflection of the people, and He could deal with that king symbolically, and in short, to deal with the people. And this has ever been true.

It was true in the days of the Lord Jesus. Herod and his ambivalence toward John the Baptist, he liked to hear him and wanted to hear more and was hoping he might crank out a miracle or two. But at the same time, he imprisoned him and wouldn't let him preach freely, and ultimately he gives in and John is beheaded.

The same is true in the treatment of the Lord Jesus Himself. The people are of two minds. When they are fascinated by Him, it is generally for the wrong reasons, and when they wave the palm branches and throw down the coats and say, Hosanna, and greet Jesus as He's on the way to Jerusalem, their hearts are not in it, and Jesus ends up weeping over the city and is disappointed in what He finds at the temple.

So as we look at the characterization of the people in these different prophets, we see that God brings to the fore different aspects of the problem. In Hosea, it was relationship, pictured in the relationship between Hosea and Gomer. With Jonah, it was their self-centeredness and lack of empathy, and the lack of love and lack of sensitivity to their mission, which is to shine the light of God's glory and to be a reflection of it.

Jonah can't wait for the people of Nineveh to be destroyed because he's got his own agenda, and his relationship with God isn't what it should be. God has to swallow him down to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea before he is able to do that. He even thinks about going where he's supposed to go, and then God has to come and tell him again, and he is quick to be disappointed and unhappy that things aren't going the way he thinks they should instead of looking for the will of God.

So there's this self-absorption reflected in Jonah that causes him not to enjoy or appreciate his relationship with God or his opportunity to be a blessing to an enormous city full of people that has children and even animals in it that can be blessed. This is the note that the book closes on. So there is this realization of historical importance and of place and moment in time and in the plan and purpose of God that Jonah completely overlooks.

Of course, he reflects the nation, Yonah the dove. Then in Amos, of course, we saw yet another aspect of this brought to the fore in the reflection of the people of God in that book. So now we come to Micah, and here we are looking at judgment is coming and the picturing of these nations where the Assyrians are going to march through down to Judah.

These others have sort of focused on the northern kingdom. Micah is talking to Judah and saying, look, judgment is going to come on you just as surely as it's coming on the northern kingdom. You're content to look up there and say, well, there are a bunch of godless, idolatrous

pagans, and you down here hide behind your facade of worship of God, but you are consumed with materialism and greed, insensitivity to the poor, and God's judgment is coming on you just as surely as it's falling on the northern kingdom.

So we saw this in the names of those towns, and then we started chapter 2 where he gets personal. He said, here's what's going on in your hearts as you lie awake at night in your bed planning what you're going to do the next day. And he uses the prominent people in Jerusalem and in Judah who have the means to exploit the poor, who have the opportunity to run roughshod over them.

You oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance, and so on. Therefore, verse 5, we left off last time, you will have no one to determine the boundaries in the assembly of the Lord, to determine the portions, to ensure that there is an inheritance. And keep in mind, and once again before we get down into the text here, when we do observation in the Old Testament, and we look at things that are happening nationally, it is a picture of our little kingdom in the soul.

The kings and the leaders, that's our volition, that's our decision making and our priority setting and our goal pursuit and our ongoing activities. We are the rulers of the kingdom and if we are unhappy with a theocracy as Israel was and we decide we give us a king, well, we are that king and we are as accountable as these dynasties in both the northern and southern kingdoms. So here, when he starts talking about the motivation of these self-centered people in Judah, they are avaricious, they are materialistic, they are out for gain and for personal satisfaction.

What are they sacrificing? What does he say here in these first five verses? You have the power in your hand, you covet fields and take them by violence, houses and you seize them, you're interested in getting this at whatever cost and because of this, there is no one to allot your spiritual inheritance, the inheritance that God apportions. Remember when they cast lots to determine who would take what part of the land under Joshua and they came in and said, here is what the tribe of Judah will have, here is what Simeon and Levi and the others will have. Benjamin, right there next to Judah, well, he says, you're deciding for yourself what you're going to take and you're not going to be able to keep it and your clan and your tribe are not going to have their inheritance that was apportioned by lot.

And it is a picture for us by way of application that the more involved and invested we are in the short-term material goals of this life, whether they are professional or possessional or achievements, whatever they may be, the more invested we get in that, to that extent we are giving away the apportionment of our eternal inheritance, the treasure in heaven, the assignment that allows us to be in the kingdom of the Father and to have a domicile within the gates of the New Jerusalem. That begins to erode and to fade away and in the extreme case, our lot and our portion, our meros is going to be in the lake of fire outside the city. We'll be out there roasting weenies over, and not even all meat weenies, over our inheritance.

It will be those soy burgers and these just unpalatable hot dogs on a twig over the fire that

burns forever and ever, which is the second death, and that's where our inheritance went. It's going to do nothing more than cook our very meager dinner, so to speak, in picture, instead of being those who dwell in the city. And you know why people dwell in the New Jerusalem? Because that's where they work.

That's where they serve, in temple service, in governmental service, in proximity to, it's just like people in Washington, D.C. You know, they've got all those nearby suburbs in Virginia where people can easily commute in because they're a part of the government. There's a huge infrastructure there in and around Washington, D.C. where everybody that not only is a senator or a congressman or in the executive branch, but all of the people that work for them and the people that work for those people, and there's just a huge government industry there. But in the ideal, you think about these people who are integral to the running of the country, the national government, live nearby so that they can get to the Capitol building and they can get to the White House and they can get to the Pentagon and they can get to those places where these important functions are accomplished and the service is rendered.

Well, that's the beauty of living in the New Jerusalem, the city that is built four square. It's not a condo on the beach. It is a place where we will serve.

Think of the Burning Ones, the seraphim around the throne of God. Think of the cherubim that are sent forth. Look at the ministering angels throughout the book of Revelation that come forth from the temple and communicate even to the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Remember the angel that comes out of the temple and tells the Lord Jesus Christ that it is time to go plunge in the sickle and reap. What a privilege to be functional, to be useful, to make God glad that he saved us. Well, this is what's on the line in these seemingly mundane and insignificant decisions that we make day by day to the extent that we throw ourselves into the mundane short-term material goals of this life with no thought for the future, not doing them as under the Lord, not doing them looking at our heart and our motivation and our ability to invest them with eternal meaning when we get so short-sighted and myopic and just stupid like these folks.

This is what it says. You will have no one to determine boundaries by lot in the assembly of the Lord. You're busy mapping out your houses and your fields.

Well, what about the assembly of the Lord? Well, you're going to have no place there. Your inheritance will not be measured out. And this casting of lots to determine boundaries goes all the way back to the days when the land flowing with milk and honey was apportioned out.

Just forget about the land of milk and honey. You're going to be on the outside hoping a little light will refract over the horizon. Well, we pick up now in verse 6. Let's read this section.

You can see in your New King James it is headed here, the little section heading says, lying prophets. Do not prattle, you say to those who prophesy, so they shall not prophesy to you.

They shall not return insult for insult.

You who are named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord restricted? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly? Well, it's an unfortunate thing that in rendering this into English, particularly for translators who aren't really plugged into the flow of thought, they're wrestling with the Hebrew here. And this Hebrew, because the prophet is keyed up, he's fired up. He is upset and unhappy about this.

His town was in the list of those that were to be overrun by the invading Assyrians. And he is invested in this message. And so just like the Apostle Paul, when he starts getting elliptical and starts leaving out verbs and just throwing prepositions and expletives and things into his language, that's what's happening here.

Well, it's a translation nightmare. You have to really consult somebody that is steeped in Hebrew to get this right. I am not steeped enough in it to get it right.

But I found a guy who was. I inherited a gracious gift from one of the retired gentlemen and scholars up in Tahlequah when I was pastoring up there. And when he had to move down the hill into sort of the final care, swan song area, he's gone to glory now and is in line to collect his reward.

But anyway, he had to scale down his library. And he very graciously invited me up and he said, Pastor, I'm going to be living in an apartment instead of this duplex house thing up here. And I've asked my sons to come up and take the books that they want out of my library.

And here's what's left. And I'd like you to do the same if there's anything you think would be useful, please take it. And so I look through and he had commentaries and things that covered areas that were gaps in my library.

And so he donated them to me. Well, one of these is a commentary on the minor prophets. It's in two volumes.

It was published in 1885. And it's kind of hard to come by now. But it was by a fellow who was, I won't go into all the details, but his name is Pusey, P-U-S-E-Y, Reverend Pusey.

And he was a rector of something somewhere, but he is a Hebrew scholar of the first water. He was a Hebrew professor. And it is rare to find somebody that not only knows the languages extremely well, but once he gets finished translating, when he puts the construction on what it's actually saying, I love his conclusion because it's the same as what I, you always love people that agree with you, but working through as best I can through the English and the lexicons and things, the conclusions that he draws about what the message is are identical with my own.

So I've copied out the, I was using my 1980s reading glasses earlier because this book is, the print is just microscopic. And so I blew it up and put it on these pages so that I can share with you some of his insights from the Hebrew about what's going on. We're only going to do this in

this little short section.

We can't do, I would love to do the whole book of Micah this way, but I just want to share with you a taste of how this would have smacked people in the face when Micah delivered it in their language. This is what's going on. And we're just going to take this little section here, verses six and following and kind of go verse by verse and look at what the Hebrew says.

And we'll just then know that this is going on throughout the book. We don't have the luxury of time to do the whole book this way, but we'll do this section just for a taste. So these two verses that I read, do not prattle and then look at all of what's in italics as the translators struggle to make sense out of this.

If you take out what's in italics, it says, do not prattle who prophesy, so they shall not prophesy to you. They shall not return insult for insult, named the house of Jacob. It just kind of starts falling apart if you don't put some filler in there to kind of bring the rest of it up to level.

Well, let's go through this in a little more detail. The word here translated prophesy, when I was looking this up in the lexicon, I thought, wow, that's interesting because it literally means to drip, for something to drop, to come down in droplets. Well, that didn't enlighten me too much.

Drip not, drop not. And it comes to mean to let your heart be filled with joy to let your words drop, to let your words fall like dew. And that helps a little bit.

We see this verb used in other contexts where the surrounding material helps us realize that, remember in Hebrews chapter six, when he says, when the field with the rain falling many times upon it only brings up thorns and briars, it's fit only for burning and is near to a curse. That's the idea. Paul is thinking back to these days of prophecy where the word for prophesy means the rain is falling, the dew is dropping, the fresh water, the living water is dropping down.

What are you going to do with that? Are you going to grow thorns and weeds or are you going to grow 60-fold, 100-fold fields? That's kind of the notion here. Well, he's quoting here, as Micah tries to deliver this prophecy, much as some of the other prophets got rebuke and resistance and people saying, shut up, we're sick of you. Remember, we saw that Amos came in and he was not a professional prophet.

God kind of slipped him under their guard because they didn't want to hear anybody prophesying. He says, I'm not a prophet. I'm not even the son of a prophet.

I'm a professional agricultural guy. I do animals. I do fig trees.

God has sent me to deliver this message. Well, same thing here. He's saying, quote, they're saying, don't prophesy.

We don't want to hear. This isn't drops of dew. This isn't drops of living water.

This isn't the beneficial rain coming upon the field. You're like Chinese water torture to us. You're like a continual dropping.

Remember that? The words of a contentious woman are like a continual dropping or whatever. Is it woman or man? I always remember it as woman. Yeah, wife.

It's like Chinese water torture. It's all in how receptive you are. To some people, this is valuable water in the desert and every drop.

You've seen these guys that get down and stick a straw down to find the moist sand and every drop is precious. To other people, every drop is torture. And they're saying, stop dribbling.

Stop dropping this stuff on us. It's like Jerry Reed said in his song, U.S. Mail. He said, if you keep hanging around my woman, champ, I'm going to leave your head about the shape of a stamp.

I'm going to drop the mail on you. And that's not a good thing. Well here, what should be a wonderful blessing is construed as an annoyance.

Stop dribbling. Stop dropping is what this literally says. Scratch out all of that.

You say to those, prophesy not so. They will not. Prophecy not so.

Prophecy not so. Prophecy not prophecy. Those who prophecy will not prophecy.

It doesn't say to you. It says to these. And this helps us understand that this is a quote.

The ones who say, stop prophesying to those who prophecy, he will not prophecy to these. He's not going to stop prophesying, but he's not going to prophecy to these. There is a time when this is your pearls before swine principle.

You present, it is rejected. There is a time to stop trying to talk to those people. And God says, I have sent my prophets.

You say to them, stop prophesying. They will not prophecy to these I have just quoted. These saying, stop prophesying.

Okay. They'll stop. You're going to get your wish and you're going to be really sorry.

Just like the last part of Romans chapter two, uh, last part of Romans chapter one, those who exchange the glory of God for something else, they're going to get their wish. Those who don't want to hear the truth and suppress it and unrighteousness, they're going to be in a realm where there is no truth. They wouldn't recognize truth if it literally fell on them.

Uh, and like the rock that crushes the rock of salvation, if you fall upon it, but if you run the other way, that rock is going to fall on you. So this is what it literally says. Quote, stop prophesying.

Those who prophesy will not prophesy to these. And this is both a prediction and an instruction to the prophet. Don't waste your time talking to people who refuse to listen.

Stop wasting your time. You need to find the ones who will listen. You need to find Simeon and Anna and Joseph and Mary and Elizabeth and Zachariah.

You need to find those shepherds on the hillside prophesy to them. They shall not prophesy to these. Uh, and then when it says, uh, they will not return insult for insult.

What that literally says in Hebrew is shame shall not depart. That's the literal Hebrew. Shame shall not depart.

And, and Reverend Pusey makes a great point here because he said, notice it doesn't say shame is going to, is going to fall on them or, or they will be ashamed. He says, shame will not depart. It is shameful that they haven't paid attention.

It is shameful that they're not interested. And these who tell the prophets to quit prophesying and God withdraws the prophets and sends them only to those who will listen. This is why Jesus started teaching indoors and only to his disciples in the latter part of his ministry.

He didn't go out publicly anymore. This is, this is what this is saying. And shame will not depart.

That shame is going to cling and remain on these now and forevermore. It's already a shame to them and upon them. And that shame, there's no way for that shame to leave.

They'll be ashamed. Now they're going to be ashamed in the resurrection. Remember the, uh, when the, uh, when the resurrection comes some, it's going to be a resurrection of life and to others, it's going to be a resurrection of everlasting shame and contempt.

This is that observe, interpret, apply. Do we listen? And this is listen, not I heard the words. This is, do I listen? And do I take on board? Do I try to extract what it means to me and then act accordingly? Am I seeking to get this done in my kingdom? Am I seeking to reverse whatever downward spiral there may be, whatever idolatry in high places may have been set up and functional in my soul kingdom.

I've got to identify that stuff and purge it out for, for these people in this day, it was normal. It was a commonplace. Nobody was shocked.

Nobody raised an eyebrow. Look at your television set. Look at the stuff that is said and done in commercials.

You can avoid the bad shows, but you can't even watch the commercials. I Tivo everything now so that I can fast forward through the commercials and the TV. I don't know what magical programming is in that thing, but it's wonderful because when you fast forward, if you just get close, it figures out where the beginning of the program is.

You know, I'm trying to watch NCIS or whatever. I fast forward through the commercials and I see the black and white screen and the poof I know is behind it. If I'm anywhere within five seconds and hit stop on the fast forward, it goes right back to where that begins and just smoothly plays.

It's, it's a miracle. I love that because I can watch what I want to watch and I can filter out the trash. Well, we've got to filter out the trash.

We've got to look in our souls and say, I don't want that in my kingdom. Remember it's, he was a good king, but he didn't get rid of the high places. He was a good king, but there was still, you know, the Asherah poles.

He was a good king, but I don't want to be a good king, but I don't want there to be any adversity of conjunction. When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ, he was a good and faithful servant period. Wouldn't that be great? Well, this is the time to heed the example that God is pointing out to the people in Judah, the people that sat under the teaching of all those teachers Jehoshaphat sent out.

Micah is talking and he's saying, who's left that I can talk to? I've, God said, quit talking to these that are saying you're just a drip. You're, you're just an annoyance. I've got to find those who will still listen.

I'm only going to talk to them. Jesus is now teaching indoors. That needs to be us, doesn't it? How are we going to make that happen? It's one thing to affirm.

It's one thing to ascend. It's one thing to say, amen, brother, but how do we make it happen? We've got to evaluate. We've got to find the high places and break them down.

We've got to find the altars of idolatry and break them down. We've got to find these bad priorities, bad expenditures of time, bad decisions that we make and bust it out, break it out. Heed this warning.

He is on a short fuse here, patience wise. God is, and he's the same God. I mentioned that last time.

So in that one verse, you can see how pungent and how freighted with important information these few phrases are. Are you somebody that says, I'm getting a little bored with Bible class. I'm getting a little sick of hearing the same old thing.

It's too repetitious. Isn't that what a dropping is? Repeat, lather, rinse, repeat, lather, rinse, repeat, lather, rinse, repeat. Well, we've got to look for the value, find the life in the water.

Maybe the reason it's being repeated is we still haven't implemented the message. I used to realize that when my dad kept repeating something, it's because I wasn't getting on board. It's amazing.

You start doing what you're told, the command to do it doesn't keep getting repeated. Instead of shooting the messenger or finding fault with the message, maybe we need to heed the message. That would be a benefit all the way around.

God's glorified. We're blessed. Where's the downside to that? Well, this is what's going on here.

That's just one verse. We're going to pause here and take our break. We're going to try to finish chapter two, looking at it in depth here and in detail.

I think you'll be able to see, as I have, that when we realize how God is communicating and what the level is, the depth here, you can guess at, even when you look at the English, you'll be able to kind of get a pretty good idea of what's going on in the language of the prophet and therefore in the hearts of those who have stopped to listen and to pay attention. It'll really kind of help us. It'll leverage us through the remaining chapters of the book.

Let's pause here and take our break.