

Kings and Prophets 15-04-17b

We pick up our study now in Micah chapter 2, pursuing our Kings and Prophets study here, and we've come to verse 7. We've deciphered, with the help of a wonderful Hebrew scholar from a century and more ago, exactly what's going on here in verse 6, and this is the rejection of the proclamation of God's Word, and it has ever been thus. You may remember, if you keep your finger here and turn over to Acts chapter 4, Acts chapter 4, after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, after the descent of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost, there is good news to be proclaimed. This is the news of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, the victor over death and the grave.

And if you look at verse 13, the authorities see the boldness of Peter and John and perceive that they are uneducated and untrained men. They perceive this, they're uneducated and untrained by their standards. Now, would you rather have a degree from the University of Pharisaicism in Jerusalem or would you rather have a degree from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself training you for 3 plus years? Uneducated and untrained is kind of in the eye of the beholder, isn't it? And it isn't what piece of paper you have hanging on the wall so much as have you sat at the feet of the Master? Have you learned, when given the opportunity, from the Word of God? So, they decide that Peter and John are uneducated and untrained men.

They marveled and they realized that they had been with Jesus. The only other time we've ever seen this kind of wisdom in the Scripture was that Jesus fellow. We thought we got rid of him, but apparently these guys absorbed something.

This, by the way, is a great encouragement, especially with Peter, because sometimes you look and you think, these disciples, you know, many times you think the Lord is just going to throw up his hands and say, let me out of the boat, you know, that's enough. You guys, I'm getting nowhere with you. And I feel that way sometimes, I think the Lord is getting nowhere with me.

And when you look at their career during the time they were with the Lord, how many baskets did you take up the first time? How many baskets did you take up the second time? Do you get it? Do you not yet understand? You know, oh, faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long may I have to put up with you? They're still squabbling over who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom when Jesus is ramping up to the arrest and trial and crucifixion. And he's weeping just a short time earlier at the grave of Lazarus, the tomb of Lazarus. How long have I been with you? I've been telling you and telling you.

Well, I'll tell you there's nothing more disappointing. If you've seen the Roma Downey, it's almost called a Roma Downey Jr. But Roma Downey, remember the Touched by an Angel gal? She was there with, who was the other, the black gal that was in that? What was her name? Anyway, Roma Downey was one of those angels. And Oprah or somebody was the other one, I can't remember.

But anyway, she's got this new thing called AD where they're trying to portray what happened after Christ, you know, Anno Domini, after Christ. So they started with the crucifixion. They've got a guy playing Jesus there, and he gets resurrected.

They go to the tomb, and they're kind of compressing everything. And I can forgive them for the inaccuracies, some of them. Some of them are just seemingly, to me, unforgivable, but be that as it may.

They're making an attempt. But here's what gets me. The disciples are sitting around.

Jesus is in the tomb. The Romans have sealed it up. And they do a good job of showing here's the tomb.

Joseph of Arimathea has lent him the tomb. He's in there. They roll the stone in.

They put the Roman seal over it. The Roman guards are there. Okay.

So now cut to the disciples. And these guys are just sweaty and swarthy, and, you know, it's cinema verite. They just say, I really liked Cleopatra and the Ten Commandments.

Everybody walked around in sparkling clean garments. And, you know, the inside of these palaces just looks air-conditioned. And, you know, if you're going to do a biblical epic, air-condition the thing.

Clean the people up. I like that. It's kind of like the old westerns.

You know, the old westerns, people were clean. They'd walk around, and they might have a little bit of dust from the road. But they were basically clean.

They didn't have just sweat soaking through there and just grimy. And that was the spaghetti westerns. Remember the spaghetti westerns? People are just sweaty and greasy looking.

And, well, you know, they feel like to get back to the actual reality, they've just got to sweat everybody up. And I just don't like that. But I digress.

Here's the cut to the disciples. And Peter and John and some of the rest of them are, oh, by the way, John is black in this telling. Mary Magdalene is a lady of color as well.

Okay. But, anyway, they're all talking. But the thing is, in this telling, the disciples don't know a thing.

You would think that they've been hanging around with the Pharisees the entire lifetime of Jesus. They can't remember anything Jesus said. Well, what are we going to do now? It's over.

He's in the grave. We're going to flee. Well, can't you? And Mary, the mother of Jesus, blue-eyed and kind of an older middle-aged woman, and she says, well, can't you, can't you? She's the only one that even vaguely remembers that there was some prediction about him coming back.

The rest of them, it doesn't even occur to them. And, I mean, anyway, the transformation from that to this in Acts chapter 4, where they are bold, they remember what Jesus taught them, they are confident, and they are unstoppable. It doesn't matter what anybody says.

They are going to proclaim. They are going to foretell. They are going to be witnesses as Jesus asked them to be unto me in Jerusalem and Judea.

And that's what they start out doing. And they do a great job. So look at this in Acts chapter 4. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled.

And they realized they had been with Jesus. Seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For indeed a notable miracle has been done through them.

It's evident to everyone dwelling in Jerusalem. And we can't deny it. It's just too obvious.

We can't tell people it didn't happen. It's just too obvious. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them that from now on they speak to no man in this name.

Think about this for a minute. A notable miracle, an undeniable miracle that we cannot refute and we cannot contradict and we can't find a way to deflate it and let the air out of it and get it out of the way. It's just there's no getting around a notable miracle having been done.

Well, we're not going to process that information. We're not going to rethink our position. We've got to find a way to make sure it doesn't spread.

This is a bad thing for us. Assigning no weight, no import, drawing no conclusions from it, not saying, hmm, maybe I ought to rethink my whole assumption set here. Oh, no.

The fact that this is possible for people made out of the stuff we're made out of, the flesh that clothes our bones and houses our organs, we are made out of the same stuff as these guys. We are just as capable of being just as stupid, spiritually stupid. They're smart for governance.

They're smart for pursuing their goals and their ends and trying to stay on top in their little hegemony. And the blindness is just palpable, the darkness in which they dwell. And there but for the grace of God go we.

This is us if we don't take steps. So this attitude, speak no more in this name, they say. They called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Well, this famously did not work, right? John wrote a gospel and three epistles and the revelation. Peter told everything to Mark to put in his gospel and then wrote first and second Peter. Went all over the place ministering and building up and proclaiming and doing what

Jesus asked them to do.

This is why even though they didn't look like they had much promise when the Lord was dealing with them in person, this is why they're Peter, James, and John in the upper room on the Mount of Transfiguration, in private, Jesus working with them, teaching them, because Jesus knows what they don't know and what they can't see, even about themselves and about each other. And it's the same with us. We think I am such a dismal failure.

I just, well, the Lord knows what he's doing. He has brought us to a knowledge of the truth for a reason. He has put us in the circumstances we have, faced us with the challenges we have for a reason.

We can't get discouraged and decide we're going to quit. What would happen if Peter had said, I deny the Lord, that's it. That's the last nail in my coffin.

I'm going back to fishing. You'll hear no more from me. I'm going back to Galilee.

Just haul in fish and feed the people. And, you know, Simon Bar-Jonah is just a footnote. He and Judas, that's it for them.

He stuck. He stayed. He persisted.

And look at what the Lord was able to do with him. Well, there are many discouragements, and there will come a time when people say, speak no more in this name. Prophecy no more.

Stop being a continual dropping. Okay, well, find the places where there still is an effective way to speak, where there are people who are receptive. Keep looking.

God didn't give us all this preparation to no purpose. We have families. We have friends.

We have co-workers. We have opportunities. And if nothing else, we can speak it to ourselves.

We can preach it in the little kingdom inside our soul. We can be Jehoshaphat, sending out the teachers saying, look, let's get the whole kingdom on board with this. Thy will be done on this earth inside my soul the way it is in heaven.

Give me the serenity to, you know, put up with the things I cannot change, however that thing goes. And, well, I don't care about the things I can't change. I need to concentrate on the things I can change.

And I can be the king of my own country here. And the sad thing is when we get so busy looking at others and sharpshooting and looking at what's going on over there, look at these guys in Acts chapter 4. Well, we can't refute this, but there's clearly something wrong with it, and we've got to squelch it and put a stop to it and throw a wet blanket over it lest it spread. Heaven forbid the gospel of the Son of God and salvation and redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins.

Heaven forbid that should spread. You couldn't be more wrong if you just, you know, I've got a long litany of ways you can be wrong. Hit yourself in the head with a wrong stick and take wrong pills and put a dunce cap on your head and set yourself in the corner with a big sign that says wrong.

Get the T-shirt that says wrong. You know, buy the whole clothing line of wrong. Live in the town of wrong on wrong street.

How could you be more wrong? These guys couldn't be more wrong if they did all of that and then some. Well, they didn't think they were, and we don't think we are either. We have to consciously cultivate the light of the Word of God shining.

Well, that's what's going on here in Micah chapter 2. Stop. They translated it prattling here, and it's not bad, but it's a dripping, it's a dropping. They're taking what is sound teaching and communication of the Word of God and construing it as something bad and something that needs to be stopped.

Well, okay. These are not going to get the prophecy, and their shame is going to stick. Their shame is never going to depart.

You think about these that put the Lord on the cross and then tried to shut up Peter and John. Do you think their shame is ever going to depart? Do you think there's some 257 million years in the future in the kingdom of the Father where, okay, my shame has finally departed? No. It will never leave.

It's permanent. It's tattooed on their resurrection bodies. Then it says, you who are named the house of Jacob.

He doesn't say, oh, house of Jacob. He just says, you've got the name. You don't even fulfill it.

I don't know why you've got that name. House of Jacob? Well, you don't fit the description. Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted? I think in the old King James it says straightened.

And this is like our memory verse. The arm of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save. Neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

It's you. You're the problem. If God seems far away, who moved? That's this.

Is it that the Spirit of God isn't coming up with good enough material anymore? He's like an old comic that can't write any new jokes, and everybody's heard him, and he's fading out. He was a one-hit wonder. They're putting Stevie Ray Vaughan and Joan Jett and a couple of others in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame this weekend.

I heard somebody talking about it. They toured the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Why, I don't know, but they did.

And they said there's a whole section of it inside devoted. There's a whole section of one-hit wonders, people that managed to get one hit on the charts and never again. And there's a whole area devoted to them.

Well, they are unable to do anything else. And these people are saying, look, we've heard the message of the Spirit of the Lord. He's a one-hit wonder.

He said that. We heard it. We're tired of it.

He doesn't say anything new. And so the question here is, are you seriously suggesting that the Spirit of God is limited? He's not creative. He can't say anything useful.

He's got nothing helpful to offer you. The Spirit of God just really, I don't really need it. Seriously, this is your suggestion? Is the Spirit of the Lord out of gas, out of ideas, not creative? Yes, He brooded over the face of the waters and implemented the commands of God the Father in getting the world created.

Yes, He raised Jesus Christ from the dead. But He's got nothing to say to me. I'm doing fine.

It's just ridiculous. Is the Spirit of the Lord straightened, O house of Jacob, you who are called by that name, but you don't act like Him, you don't listen and respond? Is this His doing? All of this greed and avarice and trampling of the poor and the state of things with such dire predictions of destruction, is this the fruit of the Spirit? When you look around and you see oppression and the cry in the streets and bloodshed and so on, is this the fruit of the Spirit? Is this love, joy, peace and longsuffering? Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly? In other words, if you can't see the good, if you can't catch the value, guess what category you're in? You're not those who walk uprightly. Those who walk uprightly don't have this problem.

They're not bored. They're not sick of the repetition. They are not deciding that the Spirit of God is a one-hit wonder.

So, He is not limited. Literally, those who can receive this good are the upright in heart. The upright in heart.

God is a blessing to those who are obedient. This isn't new information. We reviewed this back in Deuteronomy, looking at the blessings and cursings not long ago.

Verse 8, Lately my people have risen up as an enemy. My people, capital M, have risen up as an enemy. This is with vehemence, with hostility.

My people are hostile. You can imagine that nothing would grieve a spouse, a wife or a husband, more than having their opposite number hostile. The wife is hostile to the husband.

The husband is hostile to the wife. What could be worse for a child than for their parents to be hostile to them? Or a parent to have their child be hateful and ungrateful and can't wait to get away and get some distance. My people recently have risen up in hostility.

Not just apathy, but rebellious hostility. It reminds you of John chapter 1, He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. You think about the ultimate rejection of the Lord Jesus.

For a while He was an entertainment, and then they got tired of it. Well, show us another sign. I'm not going to do any more signs.

Well, we've got no more time for you. If you're not going to throw off the Roman yoke, if you're not going to be our genie and exceed to our demands and make bread whenever we want it and meet our physical needs. Our physical needs are getting out from under Roman rule and having material prosperity pictured with the bread.

Give us this bread always. They tried to make Him a king so that He would be their little genie of the lamp. And He said, I'm not going to do that.

I'm not here to fulfill your agenda. You are here to fulfill the God of Israel's agenda. Well, they didn't want to hear that, and that's how the Lord ended up on the cross.

You strip off violently the robe with the garment. The robe over against the cloak. The psalm here is the large outer garment, the enveloping cloak.

Pusey says, This large cloak was worn loosely over other dress and served by night as a covering. Adair, translated robe, is not any one garment, but everything you have underneath your outer garment. So, remember when Jesus said, if someone asks you to go with him one mile, go with him twain.

And if someone says, give me your cloak, give him your shirt also. Well, here, they're not even asking. They're grabbing the cloak, pulling it off, and taking all the rest of the clothing with it.

This would be like confiscatory tax, where you're not just going to take one thing, you're going to take everything, and leave the person unable to function, unable to stay warm in the cold, without any sort of clothing. You're taking it all. That's the idea here.

This is the attitude. It's not so much the action as the attitude. I want it, I will take it, and I will take it all.

Have you ever seen some of these sales that they have when a new Apple product goes on, or they open up the doors at a department store, and women go running in, and people get trampled at the door and have to be hospitalized, and people are elbowing and shoving others out of the way, pushing them aside so that they can grab. It's not so much that that happens, it's the attitude that it bespeaks. That people would have that mindset and feel justified in doing such things, and it is ever more prevalent.

It is ever more a part of our culture. Well, we certainly don't want to partake of that as believers. But that's what's happening in Judah.

This is Judah he's talking about. The well-taught heritage in the tribe of King David and Solomon

with the Psalms and the Proverbs and the rich heritage of teaching from Jehoshaphat on down. And this is the attitude that is rising.

They are infected with the disease of the northern kingdom, and Micah is pointing it out. And he says, look, it's not just relationship like in Hosea. It's not just your place in God's plan like in Jonah.

It's not just your opportunity as presented in Amos. Look, you are allowing your personal corruption to just define you. And for this reason, God is going to judge you directly.

It's a spiritual disease. It is a spiritual cancer. It is a spiritual rot that has taken them over.

You pull off, you strip off the robe with the garment that is against the cloak. And instead of making war against the enemies, here is the onslaught of the Assyrians coming through that series of towns. You ought to be alarmed.

You ought to be making plans and provisions to make war against your external enemy. You are making war against your own, against the weak and the orphan and the widow and the helpless in your own ranks. You are feeding on yourselves.

These diseases of the immune system that they are so trying to fight now where your body, instead of being on the lookout for external bugs, attacks itself. Your antibodies attack your good flesh. You eat yourself up from within.

It's awful when your own body is its enemy. One system attacks another. In verse 9, well, verse 8, you pull off the robe with the garment from those who trust you.

This is like swerving into the opposite lane in traffic. Do you ever think about the level of trust you have to utter and complete strangers on a two-lane highway? Even a four-lane highway with no center median? Big trucks. Strangers, I have no idea who is behind the wheel of those.

But I trust that their self-interest is sufficient, that they're not just going to swerve over into my lane, that they're not on something, that they haven't debilitated themselves with more and more legalization of happy pills and things. Did you not learn that we've got a big enough problem with alcohol without saying, well, let's throw some more substances in there as well. Everybody just get high and get happy and then get behind the wheel.

We just have faith that these people are not going to swerve into our lane. Well, here, those who trust, those that already have a lot, the poor man with his lamb, Nathan's story to David about the poor man that had the lamb, he trusts his rich neighbor to take what he wants out of his own flock. But no, the rich man comes over and takes his one lamb and slaughters it to feed the stranger.

Those that trust are raped and pillaged and plundered by you, he says. And so these who trust as they pass by, like men returned from war. Men returned from war, are these the plunderers

or the plunderers? They trust you like men returned from war.

Well, this is talking about the people who have returned from war with spoils. They've already got enough, and yet as they return home, they're pillaging their own land. It's one thing, it was commonplace to live off the land as you would go make a campaign.

You take, think about the South in the Civil War. The Union soldiers would come in and just even abandon plantations and things where there's just women folk left. Well, they're going to take the last sow and the last chickens and the last grain.

They take and they live off of that because it was so difficult to maintain supply lines, they would just live off the land. And that's the way warfare has been done for millennia. Well, when they're returning and they've come back to their own land, these men returned from war, you're supposed to stop pillaging.

These are your own people now, your home. But people return from war, and your own people say, hail conquering heroes, hooray, hooray, we're so glad you're back. And these guys say, what have you got in the house? What have you got in the pantry? I'm taking your stuff, I'm pillaging it.

And people say, wait a minute, you're our own, you're our conquering heroes. Oh no, we're taking everything you've got. It's just heinous.

That's the description in verse 8. So then in verse 9, the women of my people, you cast out from their pleasant houses, from their children, you have taken away my glory forever. These are probably the widows of those that they have now killed and plundered, like Ahab taking Naboth's vineyard at the behest of Jezebel. Jezebel actually kind of makes this all come about.

The houses were theirs as widows because the men have died. And this is what they're supposed to live on. They can't run the business, they can't do the things their husbands did, but they've at least got the property.

Well, now that's being plundered as well. So they have driven them forth. They've sent them out to be vagabonds and homeless.

This would be like going into the South after the Confederate men have been slain. This is like going into Cherokee land after the Braves have been slain and then driving out the widows and the children to take the land. I don't care that you're in hard times here.

I killed your husband, now I'm driving you out because I am only focused on what you have. I want it, I will take it, and you can't stop me. It's so much easier now that we've already gotten rid of your menfolk.

And so you take my glory from their children. Have you taken away my glory? And you think about robes of righteousness, you think about the glory that God bestowed on Israel when they

put them in this land, when he gave them this milk and honey and all the rest of it. And they're worse than any Canaanite.

They are engaged in the sins of the Amorites. Well, you can see that this indictment is not good news for the people in Judah. They pride themselves on their superficial religiosity just as their descendants will in the days of the Lord Jesus, in the days of the apostles.

They pride themselves on this veneer that hides the self-centeredness and acquisitiveness beneath. We all have this stuff in us. We are all capable of it.

And we are all tempted in one way or another. And sometimes it's just in areas. We can be doing well in some area and not in another.

And that's the population of the land. Some people are agricultural. Some people are city dwellers.

Some people look for houses. Some people look for fields. Well, when you transport that to application time for us, these are the different kinds of things that go on.

We live a very complex life, much more complex now than in days gone by. And in our souls we say, well, but you know, I'm a faithful attendee at church and I do this, I do that, I do the other. Well, look, we've got to look at the whole population of the land.

We've got to look at everybody in the kingdom and say, is there some area? I think about this. I have been blessed that forewarned is forearmed. But I've told you before, it shocked me when I went to Dallas Seminary years ago now and they said that we have a known problem with our students who are here as theology majors, here learning how to be pastors and so on, and they are coming in for counseling regularly because they are addicted to pornography.

And this is pre-internet. This is before it was three clicks away. This is before they throw it at you when you're just trying to get your email or trying to look something up.

Well, I'd like to know how to make a flute. Heaven help you if you dig too far down in researching how to make a flute or anything else on the Internet. You've got to turn on your family-friendly filters and the rest of it because the world is anxious to inject us with smut, smut on the television, smut on the Internet, smut everywhere.

And there was this huge problem. And you think, well, but wait a minute. These guys, no doubt, I'm a seminary student.

I've got a good marriage. I'm raising my kids. I'm providing.

I'm at Dallas Theological Seminary, blah, blah, blah. And yet here's this one area where there is a cancer. And you may just have a cancer in one part of your body and you say, well, look, my hands are perfectly healthy.

I have pancreatic cancer. Look at all the parts of me that are good. If you've got pancreatic cancer, I just saw where another one of our classmates in the class of 1979 from Minneapolis passed away, pancreatic cancer.

You look at the guy. They showed some pictures of him in recent years. He looks healthy as a horse.

You can be healthy in a lot of ways, but if your pancreas has got cancer in it, you are not long for this earth. That is a fast-growing, get-you-quick kind of cancer. And it got him.

And he's, you know, we consider ourselves to be young. You think about the life that we live, the kingdom of our soul. It's not enough to look at the 80% that seems to be doing well.

We have got to find, root out, and abolish the cancerous part, the acquisitive part, the judged, condemned, God sends a prophet against it part. We've got to find it. We will die on account of sin in the camp.

We will be defeated in battle because Achan has buried this stuff in his tent. We have to heed the warning of God. Don't rest on what's good.

We've got to root out what's bad. This is really the message of Micah. And thankfully, Judah is going to just clear this bar.

If 70 is passing, they're getting like a 69.75 and it's rounded up. In the days of Hezekiah, when the Assyrians actually do come down, they're just going to squeak by, saved yet so as by fire. Hezekiah himself, you remember, turns his face to the wall.

It's going to be such a near thing. It's just enough that the grace of God can bless them and they're going to last for another couple of generations and down into the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But I don't know about you.

Actually, I do know about you. We do not want to be squeakers by. We don't want to be just got there by the skin of the teeth.

I'm saved, but I'm in the darkness, which is outside. No, God has given us the grace and the opportunity to be much, much better than that. Let's step up.

Let's heed this warning, examine ourselves, find these areas that we've made ourselves comfortable in a lot of cases. We've rationalized it away. We've calloused over to where it doesn't afflict our conscience.

This is where prayer. David did this. Try me.

He doesn't say, Lord, if you just give me a second, I'll look inside and see if there's any wicked way in me. He said, Lord, you try me. You see if there is any wicked way in me.

You purge me with hyssop. He didn't say, Lord, if you give me just a second, I'm going to purge myself with some hyssop and I'll be clean. I've got a bowl over here I'm going to wash.

I'll be whiter than snow. David is a great example because he goes to the Lord. He says, Lord, you have got to do this for me.

I need it and you have to do it. That is the attitude where God will honor his word within us. God, the Holy Spirit, will convict us.

We will find and be able to root these things out and truly follow in the Lord's footsteps. Take up our cross, which is a denial of self-interest and follow the Lord Jesus. Have that mind that was in him.

That was one of selfless devotion to interests that are outside and beyond ourselves. This is the call. It's amazing to me.

I always thought that was kind of a New Testament thing. And the more we have delved into these passages in the Old Testament, the more I see that God has been ringing this bell from the beginning. Calling the people of God to love the Lord with all the heart, all the soul, all the strength, all the might.

And love our neighbors as ourselves. It has been that way from the beginning. It has transcended, transcends dispensations.

And it's our great opportunity. Nobody has the illumination and the tools and the provisions that we have in history. Nobody has ever had it the way we have it.

Even now in this present time, previous times in the church age, they didn't have what we have. So it's our time to grab for the gusto. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

We'll pick up and move forward in our study of Micah next time. Father, thank you for this privileged time in which we live. Thank you for the incredible blessing of the constant presence of your Holy Spirit.

The word that is so easily explained and easily available to us. We don't have to climb into heaven or descend into Hades to get it. It is near.

It is available as never before. We know that this is true because the time of the end is near. We pray that as we reflect on what we have seen in your word tonight, that it will be clear to us how to proceed, that we can put it into practice, that we can make our application personally and as a group, and that we will fulfill your plan and purpose in this day, in the day tomorrow, and in the days ahead, and all the time that remains to us until either by death or the rapture, we are united with the Lord Jesus Christ and move forward into the next great phase of your plan and purpose for us.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

