

Study 4 – Micah 6

Here comes the Judge

The setting of chapter six has all the trappings of a law court. And just like a scene from 'Judge Judy', we have a plaintiff (the person who brings an action against someone else), the defendant (the person accused), and an array of witnesses.



In the dock as the accused are the people of Israel. Micah, acting on behalf of God, is the plaintiff. The majestic mountains and hills are called as witnesses. They've gazed as silent witnesses both to Israel's misdeeds for generations, and to the Lord's faithfulness since the beginning of time. Calling such important witnesses adds to the seriousness of the case against Israel. In a very real sense this is a court scene, and one which God brings his grievance against his people. Another way to put it could be, the case of 'Yahweh v Israel'.

This courtroom setting in Micah is no accident. Israel has broken its covenant with God and now stands accused of unfaithfulness towards God. The essence of the people's unfaithfulness was their disregard for God's commandments, and especially those that required His people to act justly, mercifully, and to serve no other god other than, YAHWEH (God).

Read 6:1-5 With his first appeal (v.3) the Lord expects a reply ("Answer me") from those in the dock. What sort of answer do you think the Lord is trying to get from Israel?

In verses 3 & 4 the people are reminded that, through Moses, Aaron and Miriam, God led their forefathers out of Egypt. Now God wants Micah to remind them of another very important event in their nation's history. But to grasp what God is getting at in verse 5a (*"My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered."*), we need to read Deuteronomy 23:3,4 and Joshua 24:9.

In summary, Balaam, the son of Beor, was an influential sorcerer who, although aware of the true God, made his services available on a freelance basis. Near the end of their 'Wilderness Journey', as the Israelites under Moses were advancing north into Moab, King Balak of Moab hired Balaam to perform the impossible task of stopping God's people (Numbers 22; Deut 23:4; 2Peter 2:15,16).

The last part of verse 5b (*"Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."*) is a reference to completing the journey through the wilderness with Joshua, and the ultimate crossing of the River Jordan into the 'Promised land'.

With all this as background, what is God attempting to remind the people of in Micah v.5?



Food for thought...

The close link between their past history and the present generation in Micah's time is a significant and recurring theme. Time and time again in Micah, God's people are

summoned to remember when God stepped into time (not that he's ever been separate from literal time) and saved his people. What are Christians to remember? **Read & comment on Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Acts 4:12**

What about you: (i) What do you remember of the time when you were first accepted that God had saved you? (ii) Since then, how has your relationship with God grown and /or changed? (iii) Not discounting we're saved only by grace through the sacrifice of Jesus, what would it take for your relationship with God to improve on a week to week basis?

Read Micah 6:6&7 In these verses there flows a series of rhetorical questions couched in pious tones, and with a cynical note directed towards those who think they can buy off God with their offer of sacrifices. This includes the pagan practice of infant sacrifice (as followed by Ahaz King of Judah cf 2 Kings 16:3). In Micah's day everybody had their price, so why not God. In what ways do you try to 'bargain with' or 'buy off' God?

Read verse 8 God has said he doesn't want sacrifices like 'burnt offerings of year old calves ...or rams ...oil-fields'. Micah now states exactly what it is that the Lord requires of his people, including their leaders and their prophets. They are *"to act justly, ...to love mercy [some translations say 'kindness or compassion'], ...and to walk humbly with your God"*. How difficult is it for you to show these godly characteristics in your life?

In what ways do you "act justly, show mercy, kindness, compassion, in a humble" manner? (For an example of true humility see Philippians 2:5-11)



Micah's summary encapsulates Paul's words of Romans 12:1-2.

What is it about offering our bodies "as living sacrifices" that is "pleasing to God"?

Micah cannot leave his threefold definition of what God has shown to be good and requires of everyone (v8), without addressing the numerous ways in which God's people have rejected his will. **Read Micah 6: 9-16** The basic covenantal position of God's people was that when they heard God's voice there was only two options. Obey or disobey! Verse 9 begins with "Listen!". From the content of verses 9-12, which option did the people take? Explain your conclusion.

In your own words, describe how God is going to punish his people, and Jerusalem.

Read Psalm 122. Jerusalem was always meant to be a place of peace. Yet by Micah's generation peace and security were being sought in places other than God and His city of peace. But ultimately true peace can only be found in the Prince of Peace. Together, read John 14:27 *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*