

## Micah 3:1-12

### "Deception Leads To Destruction"

The Word of God shines like a light. It gives us direction. When necessary, correction. The psalmist said, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."*<sup>1</sup> It shines before me, helps me to see clearly what I'm doing, the way I'm going in life... & If you love God, you love His word, it does good to you. It helps you, strengthens you, feeds & nourishes your inner man. The word of God is light... & it is life.

However, if you don't love God, if you have no real desire to walk uprightly (that is lead a life of integrity that honors God & is equitable w/others), the word of God is something that *bothers* you. It gets on your nerves; you don't want to hear it. Because it *exposes the sin in your life*. If you wanted to repent, you'd welcome it. But if you want to root down & anchor yourself in sin, you shun it. You don't want attention drawn to your self-centered, self-seeking, self-indulgent ways. In John's gospel, Jesus said it like this, *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."*<sup>2</sup>

It's typical of today & it was happening in Micah's day. In the book of Ecclesiastes we read, *"That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun."*<sup>3</sup> Throughout all of human history, in every culture globally the heart of man remains the same. – Which is why the gospel is relevant regardless of when or where it's preached. Because it appeals *not* to culture, *not* to a particular place or time in history, but to the heart.

I say all that to say this; Micah was preaching, Micah was prophesying, but the people weren't having it. They told him to stop "prattling". Stop preaching & getting on their nerves w/all his negative prophesying. They wanted to hear, "Everything is ok, it doesn't matter how you live, what you do, how you treat others... You don't need to honor the Lord or have Him on the throne of your heart. Sin all you want & you'll still be saved in the end. God understands in your case, & He's stored up for you a long life of parties & prosperity."

Or even more that what the Bible classifies as sin, isn't really sin. It's the understanding of an ancient/archaic world, not modern progressivism. Your best life is still ahead... live it the way you want. But listen, *that* preacher is the prattler of the people.

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 119:105]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 3:19-20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ec 1:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The one who tells you what you want to hear, rather than what you need to hear opens the door (Vs 10-11) to your captivity, your enslavement to sin & the ramifications that follow. But faithful are the wounds of a friend. – Micah has been seeking to faithfully rebuke the nation of Israel, to remind them of who they are before the Lord, the life that He's called them to lead as His people, that they should repent & return to Him w/all their heart... But much like many today, rather than responding appropriately, they're refusing to hear it.

### Vs 1-3

Let's remind ourselves. That though Micah speaks to the nation, his emphasis is upon the rulers, the leaders, those who sit in seats of authority. Because generally speaking, a land will reflect its leadership. & By the time corruption has found itself in the seat of power (the nation's capital), that nation will find itself on the slippery slope that leads to the judgment of God. Government exists for the common good of the people, for the protection of the people, not the profit of their leaders.

A good leader will see himself/herself in a place of authority so that they can make the lives of those whom they lead, better. Meaning, as a leader, your authority is to be used to serve others, not have others serve you. You're to do what you do to make the lives of *others* better, not make your own life better *off* of others. As for what we just read, Vs 1 is how it should be, Vs 2 & 3 is the reality.

He's addressing the "heads" of Jacob. The "rulers" of the house of Israel. & He says, "Is it not for you to know justice?" This is the role of the rulers, the elders, the judges. To *know* justice. That is, they should be familiar *with* it, have a cognitive understanding *of* it. Their responsibility was to study the law of God so as to administer justice & righteousness amongst the people.

Listen, justice is really a foundational layer of what a healthy society is built upon. To do good is to be rewarded, to do wrong is to be disciplined (or punished/penalized). But as we've discovered, in Micah's day, justice was being perverted... The foundation was being destroyed... In the 11th Psalm, David wrote, "If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?"<sup>4</sup> & This was the problem the people were wrestling with. When the poor were drug to court, they weren't given fair hearings. They were being taken advantage of by the rich & taken for all that they had.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Ps 11:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& Those who were ruling (the heads of Jacob) who should've been administering justice on behalf of the people were in on the whole thing. They were being paid to look the other way & made rich through their *unjust* ruling.

Rather than practicing justice, loving good & hating evil, they were in the opposite place. They *hated* good & *loved* evil. Don't forget, Isaiah was prophesying throughout this time as well. In Isa Ch 5 we read where he wrote, "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*"<sup>5</sup> Listen, when there's confusion (or just plain rebellion) concerning what's good & what's evil, what's light & what's darkness... a nation is in trouble.

As far as the general consent of this nation is concerned, you (Christian) are what's wrong w/this place. You're the problem. Because you don't consent to homosexual relationships as being a "good" thing. You're not OK w/the pornography industry & all the damage it does to individual lives & marriage relationships. You think it's wrong to be drunk or stoned or in some way inebriated. You say that abortion is murder... You see? You're the one who seeks to squelch everyone's fun, everyone's freedoms & liberties. You're not (the word is) "progressive" & you're a problem.

But the Bible is clear, "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;*"<sup>6</sup> & Again, "*You who love the Lord, hate evil!*"<sup>7</sup>

Rather than being there *for* the people, they were feasting *on* the people. Enriching themselves *off* of the people rather than serving & being a blessing *to* the people. He says, "*You strip the skin from My people, & the flesh from their bones.*" The idea is that they were mercilessly reducing them to nothing. Rather than protect them, they were profit to them... & nothing more. They weren't caring for their flocks. (Write it down so you can read it later Ezekiel 34:1-11)

#### Vs 4

Interesting, isn't it? How people want to ignore God when He's reaching out to *them*. How they want to disregard Him when He's seeking to get in front of *them* & save *them* from a certain path & the end thereof... When He pleads w/them, cries, or calls out to them they put Him on the "don't call me, I'll call You list." But suddenly, when those ramifications are upon them, when having sown to the wind, they're reaping the whirlwind, they want to cry out, call out, plead & reach for Him & they think He needs to come running!

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 5:20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Pr 8:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 97:10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

A nation turns it's back on God, then when distress is upon them you hear the phrase, "May God help us..." Well, I wouldn't count on it! He might. But He might not. In fact, the distress that's upon you may be *His doing!*

Here we see a people leading godless lives, but then wanting God's help in time of trouble & God says, "It's not going to happen! You've ignored the cries of those who've called upon you when they were in need, now I'm going to ignore *your* cries when *you're* in need." Remember Prov 21:13? "*Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard.*"<sup>8</sup> Now, this isn't speaking about the guy standing on the corner asking for a handout. He's speaking about those who were needing justice, but not getting it because they couldn't get it because they couldn't afford it.

Instead of protecting the people, the rulers were profiting from the people. In Isaiah, we read it like this, "*When you spread out your hands, (pray) I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.*"<sup>9</sup> In the NT vernacular we read it like this, "*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.*"<sup>10</sup> Or as Peter puts it (quoting the 34<sup>th</sup> Ps) "*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*"<sup>11</sup>

Is God a gracious & merciful God? Yes. Should we presume upon His grace? I say, No. God is *not* obligated to do whatever we ask... some people seem to think that. But there are a few conditions when it comes to having a fruitful prayer life... A life of obedience to God's word is just one of them. Of course there's believing God, there's asking according to His will. Jesus said, "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*"<sup>12</sup> Question, is what we're seeing in Micah a people abiding in a relationship w/God, a people who aren't only about being in God's word, but God's word being active & instructive in them? No! – Now, as for that being the fact in your own life... I can't say, that's between you & the Lord. But I trust you can evaluate that or ask for Him for His evaluation of your life on that level...

But far from hearing them, God says that He will "Hide His face" from them... Do you remember the priestly blessing that Aaron was to pronounce over the people? "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;

<sup>8</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 21:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 1:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>10</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jas 2:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>11</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Pe 3:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>12</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 15:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” – The idea of God’s face shining upon you is that of His favor, His blessing upon your life. But there will be no favor, no blessing for the ungodly heartless people who only live to take advantage of others. As they have measured out, so it will be measured back... Judgment is w/out mercy to those who’ve shown no mercy... Question, do you need God to be merciful to you? Than show mercy, be merciful to others.

If you’re living a life of rebellion against God, repent. Turn around. Give your life to Christ. Jesus shed His blood, died upon the cross, rose again the 3<sup>rd</sup> day so that through faith in Him (paying the penalty of your sin [& mine]) you would never perish but have everlasting life...

Ladies and Gentlemen: This is why it’s so important that we *turn to the Lord, that we come to God, surrender to Him* (however you want to say it) when we sense that call, that tug, that desire, that pull. Because we’re not the one who reach out to Him. He’s the One who reaches out to *us*. He finds *us*. God initiates, we respond. That’s why the Bible says, “Today... if you’ll hear His voice, don’t harden your heart.” Don’t put it off till tomorrow, because you may not *have* tomorrow, He may not call out to you *tomorrow*. It may be that having sensed His call & neglecting it, that *you cry out* & He won’t hear, that He may in fact *hide* His face. You rejected Him, now He’s refusing you...

Listen, it’s true that God is gracious & merciful, but I don’t know when or where the line is for each person. He’s also, holy, righteous & just. Many people like to presume upon a deathbed confession. They’ll live however they want, but just before they die, they’ll turn from all their sin, trust in Jesus & be ushered off into heaven. That’s to presume that God will even hear you... who’s to say He won’t be the One to initiate the judgment *against* you? Having rejected J.C. your whole life, now you’ll reap the results of your own ways... He will “hide His face” from you (consciously cast you off) because you have been “evil” (ungodly) in your deeds...

### Vs 5-7

Micah has been addressing the rulers. Now he addresses the prophets who’ve been telling the rulers what they want to hear (peace, parties, prosperity is in your future). Notice in Vs 5 the accountability that God lays at their feet. He says that these “prophets” (false prophets) “make My people stray” by “chanting peace while they chew w/their teeth.” They encourage them to continue on in their ungodliness telling them that every thing is going to be ok between them & God.

Again, there's nothing new under the sun. Last week we spoke of how people in the last days will heap up for themselves (2 Tim 4:3-4) teachers who tell them what they want to hear because they'll turn aside from the truth having itching ears & they'll find plenty of "preachers" who tell them what they want to hear. We call them *liberals* or *progressives*.

It was happening in Micah's day as well. 100 yrs later it was happening in Jeremiah's day. Listen to this, **"An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?"<sup>13</sup>** & That's the problem, people don't think about "the end" of it all. What are you going to do in the end, when God won't hear you? People think about the moment & don't worry about later. But you & I do well to strive to maintain the *eternal perspective*.

If the prophets were being paid, they told them all was well. If you gave them food & drink, they gave you a message of peace. "They make My people stray, chanting Peace while they chew w/their teeth." But if you couldn't pay them, you became their feast (so to speak), they "prepare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths."

But the time was going to come when these men who claimed to bring light would be shrouded in darkness, everyone would know that they were counterfeit, false prophets. Then they'd cry out to the Lord but He wouldn't hear... the line was crossed, it would be too late, judgment would be upon them & there would be no escape. **Rather than shepherding the nation, they led them astray & the time was coming whereby they would pay... The true man of God won't tell you what you want to hear. It doesn't matter what you offer to do for him, how much you promise to pay him, he's not a hireling. You cannot serve God & money...** These guys out there who refuse to talk about sin, won't call it out for what it is, won't talk about the blood of Christ & portray God as some kind of powder puff who's ok w/whatever you want to do... God is holy! He is righteous & it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Notice...

## **Vs 8**

Notice the confidence & the contrast in Micah's calling, Micah's message Vs those who simply say what people want to hear... He exposes *them* in their shame & then declares, "I'm not like you."

<sup>13</sup> [The New King James Version](#), (1982). [Je 5:30-31] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“I am full of, #1 *power* (by the Spirit of God), #2 *justice* (which was what was needed) & #3 *might* (meaning he’s not afraid to tell them the truth, what they need to hear). Paul told Timothy, “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus said in the book of Acts that when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you shall receive *power*. The power to be a witness, the power to do the *will* of God & speak w/authority the *word* of God isn’t found in a dynamic personality, it’s the work of the Spirit of God in a person’s life. The Lord gives us the power to be the people He’s called us to be. & I might add (for you & me) that it’s something we need to seek Him for on the daily. We need that fresh filling of God’s Holy Spirit each & every day... Give us “this day” our daily bread. Spiritual sustenance through His word, strengthened through His Spirit, we need it every day.

But look at the work of the Holy Spirit in Micah’s life. The results of his being filled w/the Spirit of God was the fulfillment of his ministry. “To declare to Jacob his transgression & to Israel his sin.” The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, of righteousness & of judgment (Jn 16:8).

#### Vs 9-12

Deception leads to destruction. – To the *heads*, the *rulers*, those who *abhor* justice & pervert all equity (fairness). They judge for a bribe, the priests teach for pay, the prophets divine for money. More concerned for material gain than being right in the sight of God...

Yet because they were the “people of God”, they believed that God was always w/them, never allow any kind of harm to come *upon* them. They professed to know God but in works they denied Him... Beware of any theology that makes it easy for you to sin...

They looked at God like some sort of amulet, a good luck charm of sorts, a false confidence that mistook the ritual of godliness for a relationship w/God. Listen, it’s not about coming to church, though the Bible exhorts us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. It’s not about our giving, though we’re exhorted to give. **It’s not about our serving, though we’re commanded to serve one another... Those things aren’t the basis for your righteousness, they’re the overflow of being right w/God. I don’t do those thing so I can be right w/God. They’re the results of my love for God. Never exchange the ritual before God for your relationship with God... Judgment is coming, grace is available...**

<sup>14</sup> *The New King James Version*, (1982). [2 Ti 1:7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Prayer Points:**

God, we thank You for Your faithfulness to warn us. To be unmistakably clear with us because you desire to spare us, to save us. Search our hearts, shine the light on ungodliness w/in us & give us hearts of repentance. Renew our relationship w/You & be glorified in our lives. We pray for our leaders, we pray for our nation, our community, bring an awakening, revival in this place.

Deception leads to destruction. Don't be deceived, don't buy into the lie, "God understands." Or, "My situation is different" or "I'll wait till I'm older..." If you hear His voice today, respond & repent today. Believe on the Lord J.C. (the One who has loved you & given Himself for you) & you will be saved.