

WHO IS A GOD LIKE UNTO THEE?

TEXT: MICAH 7:18-20

INTRODUCTION:

1. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry recently said climate change (aka "global warming") is "perhaps the world's most fearsome weapon of mass destruction" and "the greatest challenge of our generation."
2. More challenging and more dangerous than Muslim terrorism, Iran, Russia, the Ukraine, China, North Korea, and so on.
3. Last Sunday, Mr. Kerry did not attend church. Instead he worshipped in a Muslim mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia.
4. Kerry said "It has been a special honour to visit this remarkable place of worship. We are all bound to one God and the Abrahamic faiths tie us together in love for our fellow man and honour for the same God."
5. But Muslims do not worship "the same God" Christians worship. Muslims understand this. In fact, persecution of Christians in the Middle East is accelerating and men like John Kerry are ignoring it.
6. There are vast differences between Allah and the true God of the Bible.
7. According to the Koran, Allah says, "I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them" (Koran 8:12).
8. But the God of the Bible is merciful (Micah 7:18, 19).
9. Muhammad said, "Fight everyone in the way of Allah and kill those who disbelieve in Allah" (Ibn Ishaq 992).
10. But Jesus (quoting Leviticus 19:18) said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 19:19; 22:39).
11. The apostle Paul repeats this in Romans 13:9 and Galatians 5:14.
12. And James 2:8 says, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well."
13. Micah 7:18 says, "Who is a God like unto thee?" This question was asked at the Red Sea (cf. Exodus 15:11).
14. In fact, Micah's name means, "Who is like Jehovah?"
15. The answer is there is no God like the true God of the Bible.
16. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach the same thing -- all of the other gods are devils. Deuteronomy 32:17 says, "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not."

17. First Corinthians 8:6 says, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

I. GOD PARDONS INIQUITY.

1. Micah is a book of judgment (1:1-9; cf. 7:1). The book of Micah is all about God's dealings with the nation of Israel.
2. Micah preached against the sins of the people in both the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah (1:1).
3. And yet Micah's message is not limited to the people of Israel. Micah 1:2 says, "Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is..."
4. Micah is a book of judgment, but it is also a book of grace (7:18). The book of Micah begins with the LORD coming down from heaven in wrath, and it concludes with a glorious display of God's mercy and grace.
5. Only God can pardon iniquity. Some people confess their sins to a priest but those priests cannot forgive their sins.
6. The scribes said, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:7). They were right, except they did not understand that Jesus is God.
7. So our Lord responded to them by saying, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."
8. Forgiving sin is the prerogative of God alone.
9. Only God can forgive our sins, and only God has the power to save sinners.
10. God alone has the power to judge sinners, and God passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage (Micah 7:18).
11. The "remnant" refers here to the remnant of believing Jews. Romans 11:5 says, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."
12. God always has a remnant! And God forgives their transgressions.
13. And the LORD can heal their backsliding, and He can restore them that are fallen.
14. It is interesting, and I think it is significant that the sermon which has been downloaded the most on our website is, "Return From Backsliding" -- with over 3,200 downloads.
15. Isn't it wonderful to know that God does pardon; and God does restore? He passeth by the transgressions of His people (7:18).
16. God retaineth not his anger for ever. Jeremiah 3:12 says, "I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever."

17. And God delighteth in mercy (7:18).
18. Psalm 103:8-12 says, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."
19. Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

II. GOD RETAINS NOT HIS ANGER FOR EVER (7:18).

1. The anger of God and the wrath of God and the judgment of God are important themes in the Bible.
2. The most well-known sermon ever preached in America was preached by Jonathan Edwards in Enfield, Connecticut on July 8, 1741. It is entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."
3. Though that sermon was preached 273 years ago, it is still widely published and widely read.
4. Jonathan Edwards said sinners are exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. He said sinners deserve to be cast into hell.
5. He said, "They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell, etc."
6. We need more preaching like that today!
7. Because He is justly displeased with their terrible sins, the LORD pours out His judgments upon the wicked.
8. Yet when sinners repent, the LORD shows "that He retaineth not his anger forever," and is always ready to save them.
9. The LORD "delighteth in mercy" (7:18). Jeremiah 3:12 says, "I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever."
10. Isaiah 28:21 says judgment is His "strange work." The LORD is more ready to save than to destroy.
11. John 3:17 says, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
12. Jesus said in John 12:47, "For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."
13. God "retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (7:18).

III. GOD IS COMPASSIONATE (7:19).

1. Micah 7:19 says, "He will turn again." This is spoken after the manner of man. The LORD is pictured as turning away in anger from sinful man, but then He lays aside His anger and turns again to reconcile and forgive. God "turns again" when man repents.
2. God is compassionate (7:19), and so we too should be compassionate.
3. One of our members mailed some books to a friend on the west coast. She went to the post office and when she found out the books were stolen, and the post office could not retrieve them, she started crying.
4. Then the post office clerk also started crying. That's compassion!
5. The Bible says when our Lord "saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).
6. Micah 7:19 says the LORD "will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities." To "subdue" means to conquer by force; to crush; to overcome.
7. Since our iniquities are dangerous and deadly to us, the LORD promises to crush them. The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* says, "Without subjugation of our bad propensities, even pardon could not give us peace. When God takes away the guilt of sin that it may not condemn us, He takes away also the power of sin that it may not rule us."
8. Charles Wesley wrote:
He breaks the power of cancell'd sin,
He sets the prisoner free:
His blood can make the foulest clean:
His blood avail'd for me.
9. This is victory over sin. The LORD "subdues our iniquities" (7:19). He crushes them. Romans 6:11 says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."
10. Spurgeon said, "What a choice promise is this, 'He will subdue our iniquities!' He will conquer them. They cry to enslave us, but the Lord will give us victory over them by His own right hand. Like the Canaanites, they shall be beaten, put under the yoke, and ultimately slain."
11. The Lord delivers Christians from the indwelling power of sin. As soon as we are saved, "the first thing the Lord does with this indwelling sin is to neutralize it. He puts in His indwelling Spirit to subdue it and over-come it" (Spurgeon).

12. Micah 7:19 goes on to say, "thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." I heard a preacher say that God has placed a sign there which says "No Fishing Allowed!"
13. D. L. Moody used to say, "There are two ways of covering sin: man's way, and the Lord's way. If you seek to hide them, they will have a resurrection sometime; but let God cover them, and neither the devil nor man will be able to find them again."
14. Don't try to cover your sin. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Do it God's way!
15. Suppose you were out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and you were to throw a stone overboard. That stone would sink to the bottom of the ocean and you would never see it again.
16. It would never rise to the surface again. It would be buried in the depths of the sea. And this is what God says about your sin and mine when we confess it and forsake it!
17. The Challenger Deep is the deepest known point in the ocean floor with a depth of over 35,000 feet. It is in the Pacific Ocean, near the island of Guam.
18. The world's tallest building is 2,722 feet tall in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. The Empire State Building is 1,250 feet high. You would have to take 28 Empire State Buildings and pile them up one on top of the other, and the Challenger Deep would still be deeper than that!
19. It is the deepest known point in the ocean floor, but I think there is a place even deeper -- and that is where the LORD cast our sins (7:19).
20. The hymnwriter referred to "the sea of God's forgetfulness."
21. *You ask why I am happy so I'll just tell you why,
Because my sins are gone;
And when I meet the scoffers who ask me where they are,
I say, "My sins are gone."*
Chorus
*They're underneath the blood on the cross of Calvary,
As far removed as darkness is from dawn;
In the sea of God's forgetfulness, that's good enough for me,
Praise God, my sins are gone. -- N.B. Vandall*
22. God chooses to forget!
23. In the beginning of verse 19, Micah is speaking for himself -- "He will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities." Then Micah speaks directly to God and switches to the third person -- "and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

CONCLUSION:

1. Our text from Micah is read in the synagogues on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement).
2. And once a year on the afternoon of Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year), orthodox Jews go to the river and symbolically empty their pockets of sins into the water, while they recite Micah 7:18-20. Many of them gather on the Brooklyn Bridge and attempt to cast their sins into the East River.
3. This ritual is called "Tashlich."
4. If you are saved, you know that this is not Biblical. This is not God's way of casting away our sins. First John 1:7 says, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."