

Biblical Teaching #19

Micah: Faithless Servants with a Faithful God

Introduction

"What does the Lord require of you?" So asks one of the most famous passages in the entire Bible. The question is found in Micah 6:8. In no uncertain terms, Micah stated what the Lord required. Moreover, Micah indicated that the people who called themselves God's people had not met the Lord's requirements.

As the prophets Amos and Hosea had also charged, God's people had knowingly failed to be faithful to God. Micah accused them of having coveted property that was not theirs and of having engaged in underhanded means to take it for themselves. Furthermore, even the religious leaders—priests and prophets—as well as the governmental leaders—rulers and judges—had sold out to the system. Judgment day was coming.

Even in the midst of the people's evils and God's coming punishment, however, Micah extended a word of hope, one of the most memorable in the entire Bible. God would eventually bring peace. The nation, indeed all the nations, would "beat their swords into plowshares" (4:3). Too, God would provide a ruler unlike the faithless, greedy rulers Micah condemned. This ruler, understood by Christians to be Jesus the Christ, would be "the one of peace" (5:5).

Micah's prophecies likely came beginning in the 720s prior to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC and extending to just before the invasion of Judah in 701 BC by Sennacherib, the Assyrian ruler. Amos and Hosea, slightly earlier than Micah, had directed their messages mainly toward the Northern Kingdom. Micah 1:1 states that Micah's messages are directed toward (1:1) both "Samaria" (referring to the Northern Kingdom) and "Jerusalem" (referring to the Southern Kingdom, Judah). The Book of Micah thus speaks to "Israel," the whole people of God, both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. Perhaps the greatest emphasis is on Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Micah's messages continued to speak with power to the surviving portion of Israel, the Southern Kingdom, on into the time when Judah faced God's judgment at the hand of Babylon in the sixth century BC.

The following outline helps identify the teachings that Micah presented to his people regarding their (God's people) faithlessness and God's faithfulness even in the face of their sin. These teachings then will guide our four studies of the Book of Micah. Please note that often HCO Bible study units follow a "verse by verse" and "chapter by chapter" progression of the theme. However, to help us follow the teaching of this prophet, the writer has chosen to outline the teachings and then look at each one wherever it is present in the Book of Micah. Therefore, we will study the book theme by theme rather than chapter by chapter.

It would be helpful if you made copies of this page for each participant in this unit of four studies of the Book of Micah.

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with a Faithful God"**

Unit 46: God's Requirements of His Children

Session #1

God's Judgment and His Mercy (1:1-2:3; 7:1-7)

- The grace of a warning (1:1-7)
- The grace of an intercessor (1:8-16; 7:1-7)
- The grace of justice (2:1-11)
- The grace of hope (2:12-13)

Session #2

Leadership Old and New (3:1-12; 5:1-5; 4:1-5)

- Corrupt Leadership (3:1-12)
- God's Ideal Ruler (5:1-5)
- God's Ideal Rule (4:1-5)

Session #3

God's Requirements (6:1-15)

- Remember God's Grace (vv. 3-5)
- Reject Empty Religion (vv. 6-7, 9-15)
- Live from the Inside Out (v. 8)

Session #4

The Incomparable God (7:8-20)

- God's Incomparable Justice (vv. 8-9)
- God's Incomparable Mercy (vv. 18-19)
- God's Unchanging Character (vv. 14, 20)

Additional Resources for Studying the Book of Micah:

James Limburg. "Micah." Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988.

B. Elmo Scoggin. "Micah." The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 7. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1972.

Daniel J. Simundson. "Micah." The New Interpreter's Bible. Volume VII. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Ralph L. Smith. "Micah." Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 32. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1984.

Hans Walter Wolff. Micah: A Commentary. Translated by Gary Stansell. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990.

Hans Walter Wolff. Micah the Prophet. Translated by Ralph D. Gehrke. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.