

20241215 The book of Micah – Dr John Tan

What are the three main areas of the book?

1. The way down
2. The way out
3. The way forward (this is what I will be focusing on)

What is the point of studying this book? What does it have to say to us?

The book of Micah is a reminder that when we do wrong, the Lord will give us warnings of impending judgement, but with the warnings also provide a way out. But that way out must be demonstrated through lives lived right before the Lord.

What were some of the things that were clearly Israel's and Judah's sins?

Judah and Israel were practicing idolatry. They seized property that they really should not be taking. For instance, King Ahad, Jezebel's husband, stole a family vineyard from Naboth when the latter refused to sell it to him (1 Kings 21). Even the prophets had become corrupt and for money, for as long as people paid them, they were willing to promise God's protection, even when God made no such promises. These prophets became a 'for profit' organization but in so doing, became a 'non-prophet' group of people.

The leaders were also given to bribery and were happy to bend the laws to favor the wealthy and to take land away from the poor. Stealing from and oppressing the poor is something that makes the Lord really angry.

They were also offering sacrifice while they were essentially unrepentant (Micah 6:6 –7). Even today, there are many who come to church and sing and 'worship' but our hearts are unrepentant. That is why the Lord said that we must worship in spirit and in truth.

In a time when we prefer 'prophets' who say nice things about how much we are favored in God's eyes, we see Micah. When Micah sees the wrongs going on in the country, he got himself ready to pick a fight with the leaders of the land.

I will be concentrating on Micah 6:8.

How is Micah 6:8 to be read? How was it meant to be expressed?

We have romanticized this verse quite a bit – and it needs to be read in its context. This part of the chapter needs to be read in the context of the earlier verses (i.e., verses 2 to 7).

What does it mean by 'to do justly'?

To do justly is about being righteous, demonstrating moral rightness. If you are going to take someone else's money for a job that you have been hired to do, demonstrate that you are going to do it justly by being honorable and by doing a really good job.

To do justly is about making things right relationally with God and with your fellow man. Amos 5:25 says that justice should roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream. It is not just something that we practice on a Sunday – but it is to flow on, and to originate from a pure source.

Doing justly is about defending the oppressed, helping the fatherless and widows.

But standing for justice and doing justly can be costly and we need to ask ourselves whether we are willing to pay that price.

How does God do justly? He did it by demanding that a price be paid for sin. That is why the Bible says in Romans 3:23 that all have sin and fallen short of the glory of God and in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death.

What does it mean by ‘to love mercy’?

This does not mean that we are to be a doormat for everyone to step on. Loving mercy includes elements like to love kindness and to consider how to demonstrate mercy after having considered the matter of doing justly.

Romans 6:23 – but the gift of God is eternal life in our Lord Jesus. He did justly but demanding that the price for our sin be paid – and that price is death. Then He demonstrates that He loves mercy by offering His own son to pay that price.

What does it mean by ‘to walk humbly before God’?

This involves realizing that we are nothing without the Lord and so we are to walk modestly and meekly before Him. Remember that there is no room for God’s presence within us when we are already full of ourselves. Beware also the matter of having pride disguised in the robe of humility.

To walk humbly before God is about not being domineering and controlling, hard, cruel and unkind, not comparing ourselves with others, especially in the area of accumulated material wealth.

Conclusion:

1. The way down
2. The way out
3. The way forward

There is a need to balance out doing justly and to loving mercy – and the way to do that is to walk humbly before God. Some people pursue justice with a hard hand (and even self-righteousness) – these need to balance with loving mercy. Some love mercy so much that there really is no justice. What needs to be done is that we stand before the Lord, knowing that it is He to whom we must answer, and as we walk humbly before Him, using only His word as our plumbline that we will be able to learn to adjust to a situation where we are truly pursuing justice, while showing mercy.