

# Minor Prophets' Major Gripes, VI

## Micah on The Requirements

July 13, 2003

### MICAH COMES TO THE PARTY

- We have now sat under Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah.

One thing we're reminded of as we study these Minor Prophets is the two things that remain consistent throughout the ages:

1. God's nature (He is a loving, just, and patient God)
2. Human nature (We are self-centered and self-serving)

The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah ... - Micah 1:1 NIV

He was a country boy from a small town who took his message to Samaria (capitol of Israel) and Jerusalem (capitol of Judah). Many of the judges, priests, and prophets had corrupted their offices; and the people had adopted pagan gods to worship.

- And they weren't all that receptive to Micah's message.

If a liar and deceiver comes and says, 'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,' he would be just the prophet for this people! - Micah 2:11 NIV

- They just didn't care to learn how to be more faithful.

In fact, they felt like they were already doing their fair share for the Lord; what with all those Mosaic laws and rules about food and cleanliness and sacrificing.

Whereas, with false gods they were actually expected to visit temple prostitutes! Drunkenness wasn't frowned upon. And that fertility feast could get pretty wild from what I understand.

- They enjoyed the freedom from burdensome moral regulations.

Yet, they expected Jehovah to continue blessing them; as though He owed them. After all, they still paid their dues at temple, and kept up many of those wearisome religious regulations.

- And in this environment, Micah enters with strange news.

## COURTROOM DRAMA

The Lord is going to “take Israel to court,” so they can plead their case and He can plead His; and then an impartial judge can decide if maybe God has been too demanding on these people.

Micah tells them, in verse two, that God is going to witness against them, and then he helps them picture what it would be like as the Lord made His way to the courtroom:

Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place; he comes down and treads the high places of the earth. The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope. – Micah 1:3-4 NIV

This is because of the radiance and brilliance of His glory, the splendor of His holiness, and the majesty of His perfect purity! That’s when your attorney would lean over and say, “This don’t look so good. I’m not sure we’ll be intimidating the witness.”

Listen to what the LORD says: “Stand up, plead your case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. – Micah 6:1 NIV

The basis of their case was that God simply expected too much of them. They felt burdened by all their religious rules.

“How many times do I wash after touching a dead animal?!”

How could they know that 2500 years later, Louis Pasteur would associate germs with human disease and many of these laws would become modern-day common sense? They were just burdens!

“Nobody else’s slaughter-house has to be this sanitary!”

They failed to grasp that this system was also designed to keep them safe from the influences and pitfalls of pagan practices, and pave the way for the savior of mankind.

And notice that it’s the mountains who will judge. They were uniquely suited for the task. The “High Places” are where the people had built pagan altars and sacrificed to false gods.

“Pray you don’t get Judge Vesuvius ... that guy is volcanic!”

Hear, O mountains, the LORD’s accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. – Micah 6:2 NIV

Ahh, the Lord has a counter-suit! From His perspective, He has the right to ask even more of them than their currently doing.

“My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery ... - Micah 6:3-4 NIV

Was the burden when I rescued you, and removed the bricks from your backs? Is that the burden you're referring to?! He reminds them of the many blessings He has given them. “Was it when I sent Moses to lead you? Oh, maybe it was the miracle I did with Balaam's donkey to turn a curse into a blessing!”

And then he asks them to think about what would satisfy the debt that they owe the Lord.

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? - Micah 6:6-8 NIV

- Micah's gripe had nothing to do with paying God back.

## **MICAH'S GRIPE**

The heart of the problem was that they had wrong motives. They believed that God could be satisfied with external formalities.

- Religion only becomes wearying when it's not heartfelt

A desire to please, bless, and honor God motivates us to act righteously. Serving God out of obligation just doesn't last.

Q: Don't you fall into that same trap at times?

1. Thinking that God will be happy with deeds and dues.
2. Thinking that we're burdened by how much He demands.

Q: Do you ever focus too much on the external formalities?

I'm supposed to tithe how much? How often do I "have" to read my Bible? What's the least amount that will satisfy Him? But everybody else gets to go fishing! They don't have to give some of their money to help other people! Another Bible study?

Q: “My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you?”

Q: Was it when I delivered you from your addictions? Or restored your marriage? Or was it when I put My Spirit in you and gave you a peace that passes all understanding?

We don't really "give up" anything for the Lord.

- We just stop doing the things that destroy us
- And start doing the things that bring true joy

This is why it's such a perversion to turn the practice of faith and righteousness into some kind of "repayment plan."

## THE REQUIREMENTS

Back in the courtroom, the Lord told the Israelites there was one thing they did owe Him.

And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. – Micah 6:8 NIV

- Just give me a heart that desires to be like Me.

The requirement is a loving, obedient relationship that reveals itself in three dimensions: outward, inward, and upward.

### 1. Act Justly (An outward expression)

- Honesty, integrity, authenticity, and genuineness.

Live this way and you will experience the "burden" of respect and joy and good reputation.

### 2. Love Mercy (An inward expression)

- Compassion, patience, concern, and loving-kindness.

Learn to enjoy treating others better than they deserve and you will experience the "burden" of peace and calm, and contentment.

### 3. Walk Humbly (An upward expression)

- Obedience, loyalty, adoration, and devotion to God.

Recognize that God alone is your source, and you will experience the "burden" of wisdom and strength, and assurance.

The grave mistake that the Israelites made was thinking that they could reap the rewards without following the requirements.