
Day 176 - June 25

The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

The Prophecies of Micah

Readings: *Micah 1:1-3:12*

Reflections:

- The prophet Micah comes to Judah just as Amos is sent to Israel in the North. All of the messages are the same: Israel is under judgment because they have rejected God, his mercy and justice for the poor and have turned to idols, prostitution and vain empty worship. Although judgment will be severe, a promised deliverer is coming. There are many parallels to Isaiah in Micah but as contemporaries, we should expect this.
- Micah's vision opens with the Lord on the move and ready to act against Judah. We see in the opening verses the direct connection between idolatry and prostitution. Remember again that the pagan worship of this region was focused on fertility and sex.
- Micah's prophetic response makes him look like a madman. "Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl. For her wound is incurable..." The prophet's call seems to be lived out looking pretty crazy. It was how the prophet got everyone's attention and dramatized the message. The very next verses declare that Judah is naked and will be conquered.
- They are to shave their heads in shame as they watch their children be led into captivity. It is a terrible message and apparently Micah in his warning physically portrayed it to his listeners. This could make Sunday mornings very fun if we did that today.
- The greed and injustice of the people are clearly spelled out. "Woe to you who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his

inheritance.” One of the primary means of ensuring equality of well-being within the nation was protecting the inheritance of the land and each person’s personal ownership of their home. Shelter and the ability grow food and raise animals was essential to a sustained life. The greatest way to create poverty and injustice was to take people’s home and land. Israel was a unique nation among the ancients because of its high emphasis on personal ownership and compassion for the poor.

- What is the purpose of judgment? “You will no longer walk proudly.” We see here a reference again how God is offended by those who are proud. Pride leads to self-centered living that ultimately victimizes other people.
- Micah warns against false prophets who only tell people what they want to hear. I love what he says they prophesy, “...plenty of wine and beer.” It is clear that while Micah is warning people of judgment there may be others who are declaring it is party time.
- The final verses of chapter two point to a coming day of salvation where God will again gather a people to be his flock and will send their king to “pass through before them, the Lord at their head.” The coming king will somehow be synonymous with the presence of the Lord. As we will see, the coming of Jesus to create a new community devoted to serving God, living for love, mercy, justice and peace will also be understood as God coming to dwell with us through Christ. Thank God for Jesus!