

## The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

### *The Prophecies of Micah*

Readings: *Micah 6:1-7:20*

#### **Reflections:**

- Micah's third discourse starts with creation being called as a witness against God's people. Creation throughout Scripture is viewed not just as a stage on which the drama of God unfolds but also in some ways a silent character. Creation testifies about God. Creation groans. Creation worships. Creation in this context is called as a witness. The created order is in relationship with humanity and carries with it the principles of God. As humanity rebels against God, creation suffers as we have witnessed over the centuries.
- Micah then reminds the people of their past and their journey out of slavery. Again we see here the importance of remembering the past. God expects his people to remember what he has said and what he has done. To lose sight of and forget both dishonors God's faithfulness as well as leads a person or people into faithless disobedience. Our ability to obey and experience God's best is rooted in our ability to walk by faith. Our ability to walk by faith is grounded in our ability to remember what God has said and done. "Remember your journey...that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord."
- Micah then speaks out again one of the great irreligious passages of the Old Testament. "With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted one?" The right answer according to the Law of Moses was an acceptable sacrifice. Micah responds by listing the greatest sacrifices imaginable, even the unthinkable offering of your first born child. He then rejects all of this. "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." This is a direct parallel to David's confession in Psalm 51:16-17: You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." God does not care about the external signs of devotion. God cares about our hearts and how our hearts in turn enable us to demonstrate his love through justice for the poor and mercy for the broken. The issue is ultimately whether our hearts are humble and submitted. Israel had lost sight of their past as slaves whom God has rescued. They had become proud, abusive and religious. All of this was completely

offensive to God and through Micah he was calling his people back to the essentials. Jesus would do the same as he would summarize all of the Law of Moses into two laws of love.

- The injustice of the people has brought God's judgment. "You will eat but not be satisfied...you will store up but save nothing...you will plant but not harvest..." God's judgment was a complete reversal of the promises that came with the Promised Land. All of the promises of blessing were being undone by the people of God rejecting God's heart and his ways. They as a nation were reaping what they have sown. The judgment of God would also bring a deep division of all relationships. Just as God's blessing brings a deep unity of relationships, so his judgment brings division. "Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace, be careful of your words...a man's enemies are the members of his own household."
- The prophecies of Micah end with the hope of God's coming salvation. "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light. ...He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness." "The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries." "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us..." God will ultimately reveal his ultimate expression of mercy and forgiveness through his Messiah, the one born in Bethlehem.