

MICAH PART 2

Catherine Hutton

THIS BIBLE STUDY IS PART 2 OF A THREE-PART BIBLE STUDY IN MET CONNEXION.

We are going to pass quickly through Micah chapter 3 to focus on chapter 4 in this study. When we read through Micah chapter 3, we witness the weight of the Lord's rebuke against those who are in positions of responsibility for the well-being and the faith of his people.

There has been selfishness and greed shown by rulers, leaders and prophets which will lead to disgrace and the absence of God's presence in their lives and their influence will be without God's authority. Verses 1 and 2 are particularly graphic and distasteful. The outcome of God's abandonment of them is inevitable, and towards the end of the chapter, in verses 9-12, we see their vain and self-serving mockery of worshipping the true and living God equated with the 'high places' of pagan idolatry in the land. There is an indictment here that bears a permanent witness to all who lead others in worldly or spiritual terms. Those who arrogantly use their position or calling to raise themselves up over the people whom they should be serving will not be honoured by God. This is a stark warning to us all to be faithful in the discharge of all our duties and honourable in the things which we deem 'godly'.

Pause to read chapter 3 and linger on the impact of Micah's words. What do you make of chapter 3 verse 12? Are there challenges for you to address in your own heart?

Micah's Israel was a long way from the vision of the descendants innumerable that God had promised Abraham. Faithless and wicked, these people were cheats and were greedy; not people who followed the Law and the Prophets. God's judgement against this wickedness would lead to generations of hopelessness and struggle as the people of Israel were taken captive, along with their lands and all their wealth.

Here, in the middle of the prophecy, Micah paints a picture of the promise that living faithfully in step with God will bring.

Look at the opening words of chapter 4, verse 1. Consider the time you are in. How might the future pictured here offer hope and life for your situation?

We also find painted here a picture of the reality of God's power. Even when the people have failed, God does not fail. God's mountain is higher than the 'high places' on which idols and false gods are worshipped. God's rule is one of peace and of justice which will have consequences.

What are the consequences of God's rule for the nations?

What are the consequences of God's rule for the faithless Jerusalem?

The vision of God's peace and rule is beautiful. It shows the world living under Yahweh's rule and the gentle grace that flows from living in step with God.

THE REMNANT

Does remaining faithful to a minority cause make you an idiot or a hero? Think about various causes you have supported for too long or gave up before they were over and so contributed to the demise of something good...

I love the reference to 'the remnant' which we find in verses 7 and 8. The remnant will be a people who have kept faithful to God and honoured him by keeping his Law and paying attention to the words of his faithful Prophets. This goes against the prevailing culture of the time. The remnant is a significant image in Micah, one that is good for us to dwell on.

What beautiful or useful things can be made out of remnants?

Consider the use of food ingredients, fabric, other materials such as wood or metal or waste...

God's remnant will not be the scraps and waste of something that was once great - it will be the good which is left when the bad and rotten is taken away. The remnant will be the start of a new people who will be built into the great people innumerable as promised to Abraham & Sarah.

I will make the lame my remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The Lord will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.
Micah 4:7

In Micah's day, the lame were those who would not be able to walk very well. Those people were deemed as having no military usefulness in defending a nation, and yet these are the ones whom God is going to make into his own mighty people. Their strength is their faithfulness to God and their love of God's priorities for themselves, other people and the rest of the world. There is no strength like it. Once the strong nation, full of pride and arrogance in its own abilities is brought low, God will gather up the least and the last to rebuild the covenant people. They are the remnant.

Today, this verse could be read as are those who have no credibility or social currency. They/we are mocked openly and despised for their lack of guile and their inability to fit in with the popular people. Those who are so absorbed with their own priorities that they take no notice of the fashion and trends around them. These are the people whom Jesus came to serve and to save, and as a consequence these are the people who populate the church of Christ. These are the ones who are not 'cool' or with the up to the moment language that make them easily fit in. Instead, they are totally focused on the things of God. They are committed to honouring the people of the world as God intended - without deceit or cheating. They conduct their life and faith with justice, love and honour. They are today's remnant.

Is the language of 'remnant' important to us today? What might it mean for you, your fellowship group or local church?

I wonder if it might be liberating to be the 'remnant', having discarded the pressures of fitting in with the world views that rankle and instead embracing priorities that take seriously the rule and reign of God? It will never lead to elevation in worldly circles, but we look to the original for our example:

Jesus would be the one born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of Judah's cities - into the line of King David who was the least of Jesse's sons.

Jesus will be full of loving kindness and mercy; Jesus will do justice and walk in step with the plans and purposes of God. He is the ultimate remnant on which the people of God will be built - without a break in the ancestral line. Jesus is the one who is the 'Yes' to all God's promises. God is the promise keeper in the making and maintaining of his covenant throughout scripture and in eternity.

Talk about God as promise keeper in Micah's prophecy.

How do the people know that God can be trusted?

How do you know that God can be trusted?

PRAY

- For a heart of love for the world.
- An attitude of joyful obedience to God.
- A desire to love as he loves.
- A willingness to be considered nothing so that the blessing comes from God alone.
- Pray that the world might come to know salvation through Jesus Christ. Amen

The Revd Catherine Hutton is Lead Minister for Epsom and Cheam Methodist Churches. She has a passion for building the church in discipleship for true evangelism, Scriptural holiness and missional engagement with the local community. She lives in Epsom with her husband Gavin, two sons - Aidan & Joel - and Rocky, the ministry Chihuahua. She is partial to a sparkly manicure and a good Marvel movie.

