

The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

Lesson 7: Corrupt Leaders and the Coming Ruler from Bethlehem -- Micah 3:1-5:15

Few things wound a community like leaders who feed on the very people they are supposed to feed. Micah chapter 3 paints that picture in language so raw it is hard to read. The rulers who should love justice instead “hate the good and love the evil”; they tear the skin from God’s people and eat their flesh like meat in a pot. The prophets prophesy for pay, crying “peace” to anyone who fills their mouths and declaring war on anyone who does not. The priests teach for a price. And then, astonishingly, all of them lean back and say, “Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.” Corruption wrapped in religious confidence is a terrible thing.

So God announces that the unthinkable will happen. Because of these leaders, “Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins.” The holy city, the temple mount itself, will be reduced to a plowed field. A people who presumed on God’s presence while trampling His ways would learn that His presence is not a lucky charm to be exploited but a holy reality to be honored.

And then the storm clouds part. Chapters 4 and 5 lift our eyes to the latter days, to a mountain of the Lord’s house established above the hills, with all the nations streaming up to it to learn God’s ways and walk in His paths. Swords become plowshares. Spears become pruning hooks. People sit unafraid under their own vine and fig tree. This is not a description of an earthly political empire; it is the gospel age, the reign of God breaking into the world through His church, drawing in people from every nation. Micah saw it centuries before it dawned.

At the center of it all stands one verse that the wise men would quote to a troubled king seven hundred years later: “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” The eternal Son of God, whose origins are from everlasting, would be born in a forgotten little town. The Ruler who would shepherd His flock and be great to the ends of the earth, the one of whom Micah says simply, “he shall be their peace,” is Jesus the Messiah. This whole lesson is built around Him.

Group Discussion: Micah describes leaders who exploited the very people they were meant to serve, yet still claimed God’s blessing. Why is leadership that uses people so destructive, and what does godly leadership look like by contrast?

Personal Reflection: The leaders of Micah’s day presumed on God’s presence (“no disaster shall come upon us”) while living however they pleased. Where might you be presuming on God’s favor while quietly ignoring His call on some area of your life?

Read Micah 3:1–5:15

Study Questions

1. Micah confronts rulers who “hate the good and love the evil” and devour the people they should protect (3:1–3). What does God’s fierce response to corrupt leadership reveal about how seriously He takes the responsibility of those entrusted with authority over others?
2. Whether as a parent, employer, teacher, older friend, or church member, you hold some measure of trust over others. Where are you tempted to use a position of responsibility for your own benefit rather than for the good of those entrusted to you?
3. The prophets cried “peace” when they were fed and the leaders leaned on the Lord saying, “No disaster shall come upon us” (3:5, 11), all while living corruptly. How does false religious confidence give people a dangerous sense of security, and how can we tell the difference between true faith and mere presumption?
4. These leaders assumed God’s presence guaranteed their safety regardless of how they lived. Where might you be presuming on God’s grace, treating His favor as a guarantee while neglecting obedience? What would genuine reliance on God look like instead?
5. In contrast to the ruin of Zion, Micah sees “in the latter days” the mountain of the Lord’s house established, with all nations flowing to it to learn God’s ways (4:1–3). How is this vision fulfilled in the gospel age and the church drawing people from every nation, rather than in a future earthly, political kingdom, and why does that distinction matter?

6. Micah pictures the peace of God's reign: swords beaten into plowshares, each person sitting unafraid under vine and fig tree (4:3-4). Christ has come to bring this peace. How are you experiencing His peace, and where are you called to be a peacemaker who turns weapons into tools of blessing?
7. Micah promises that God will gather the lame and the outcast and make of them a remnant, and that the Lord will reign over them (4:6-7), and the coming Ruler will arise from little Bethlehem (5:2). What does God's pattern of choosing the small, the weak, and the overlooked reveal about how He works in the world?
8. Bethlehem was "too little to be among the clans of Judah," yet God chose it for the birth of the Messiah. When you feel small, overlooked, or insignificant, how does it encourage you that God delights to do great things through people and places the world considers little?
9. Micah prophesies, "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days" (5:2), the one who will shepherd his flock and be great to the ends of the earth, the one who "shall be their peace" (5:4-5). How is this prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-6), and what does "whose coming forth is from of old, from everlasting" tell us about who Christ truly is?
10. Look back over these three chapters, from corrupt leaders to the Ruler from Bethlehem. Name one specific way Jesus, the Shepherd-King who is our peace, is reshaping how you lead, how you trust God, and where you place your hope.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 2:1–6, the wise men and the chief priests cite Micah's Bethlehem prophecy; John 1:1–3, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God; Isaiah 2:1–4, the mountain of the Lord's house and the nations streaming in; Acts 2:16–17, this is what was spoken by the prophet, in the last days; Ephesians 2:13–18, Christ himself is our peace, who made the two one.

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