

Micah

Through their words and sometimes strange actions the prophets cautioned a rebellious Israel that the way they lived their lives would have consequences unless they repented and turned back to God. This pattern of God calling His people back to faithfulness through warnings, the warnings either heeded or ignored, and the resulting blessings or judgement is repeated throughout the prophets. But overriding this pattern something else is also at work - the faithfulness and goodness of God; His unwavering covenantal love for His people.

Warnings Issued to Israel and Judah (Micah 1:1-7 & 3:9-12)

Under the leadership of their kings the Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen into idolatry and in doing so had abandoned God and broken the Law of Moses which they were required to live by. They put their idols and altars on hilltops referred to as high places, which God said He would trample (vs. 3). The Idolatry of the North had spread into the Southern kingdom, even reaching Jerusalem which God called the "high place of Judah" (vs. 5). Micah warned the people that unless they heeded the warning and turned back to God their Kingdom would be completely destroyed,(vs.6-7).

While Judah also began to turn to idolatry, God's warning to them through Micah is focused on the corruption of their leaders and prophets. They detested (abhorred) justice and made crooked (twisted) all that was straight. They took bribes in courts and treated the people harshly. They had no regard for God, the Law of Moses, or the people they ruled. It was the exact opposite of what God required in the Mosaic law.

The People's Response to Micah's Message (Micah 2:6-7 & 3:11b)

"Do not preach"—thus they preach—"one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us." Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Has the Lord grown impatient? Are these his deeds?

"Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."

They refuse to listen and tell Micah to be quiet and not to preach these things. They tell God's spokesman to stop speaking. They didn't want to hear things that pointed out their own shortcomings or that brought about conviction. They relied on the fact they were God's people and ignored the uncomfortable idea that their actions had consequences.

The Results of Ignored Warnings

The judgement for Israel's idolatry was the destruction of the Northern kingdom. The capital city of Samaria was completely destroyed down to its foundations. Instead of

being a populated city it became a heap of rubble and a field for vineyards. This prophecy was fulfilled during Micah's lifetime in 722bc when the Assyrians captured and destroyed the city of Samaria. Most of the people of the Northern kingdom were taken away and dispersed throughout Assyria.

Judah would share the same fate. In 587 BC Babylon destroyed the walls of Jerusalem, ransacked the city and took most of Judah into captivity in Babylon. Like Micah prophesied, Zion became like a plowed field, and Jerusalem became a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple a wooded hill.

An Unconditional Promise to an Unfaithful People (Micah 4:6-7)

But this is not the end of the story. Overriding the pattern of warning, stubbornness and judgement is the promise of God's faithfulness and love. Even though Judah had rejected God and turned from His law and so were scattered among the pagan nations, God would show His goodness to them and restore them to the promised land.

One of the questions that we ask when we see God's incredible goodness to people who rebel and reject Him is why? Why would God continually show love and kindness to evil people? The answer is in the last two verses of Micah.

Micah 7:18-20

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?

He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

The reason is because of His **Chesed**, His covenantal love. He has sworn faithfulness to Israel (vs.20). His covenant promises to them are not conditional, in other words they are not based on behavior. It's not a "if you do your part, I'll do my part" covenant. God is faithful even when Israel is not faithful. And while any generation might suffer the judgement for their sins, (like the day of rejection), God will never abandon the nation of Israel.