



Major Lessons From Minor Prophets Lesson 7 2Q 2013

God's Special People (Micah)

SABBATH

Read Micah 6:6-8:

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ 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.

Thoughts?

What does this text mean?

Last week we asked the question, How could God forgive Nineveh when they didn't bring any animal sacrifices, they didn't worship at the Temple, when they didn't have their sins confessed on a lamb and the blood taken into the Sanctuary – so how was God able to forgive them?

What about this text? Does it give any indication regarding the value of animal sacrifice and the Temple service? Did any of that ritualistic activity, ever, at any time in human history, provide Remedy for sin?

What would it mean if sacrificing of animals actually did provide the solution for sin?

- Christ's death wasn't necessary
- We could accomplish our own salvation by killing animals
- If the animal sacrifice actually resulted in salvation, then the purpose of the death of the animal would be for what? Appeasement – thus if one promotes the idea that animal sacrifice was necessary for salvation, one is promoting paganism.
- What was the purpose of the sacrificial system?
 - Theater to act out the plan of salvation
 - Bring conviction to make a person sick at the idea of sin

What is God then saying here through Micah? What does he want from his people?

He wants transformation of the heart, mind, character – any other passages that support this?

- “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” John 3:3



- “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.” DT 30:6
- “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” PS 51:10
- “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that **I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned** among the nations where you have gone. ²³ I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, **the name you have profaned among them.** Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when **I show myself holy through you before their eyes.** ²⁴ “ ‘For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; **I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.** ²⁶ **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.** ²⁷ **And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.** Ezekiel 36:22-27

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character,** a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. {DA 762.2}

What is it God wants to do for us? Through all of these passages what law have you heard in action? The law of love – the design for life which needs to be restored in us! What are we supposed to do?

Read first paragraph, “The prophet Micah...” thoughts?

What makes sin, such as dishonesty, injustice, bribery etc. “fatal”?

- It breaks the law and the lawgiver must execute the death sentence upon you?
- OR, it violates the protocol upon which life is based?

Does it make a difference how one understands why sin is fatal? What difference does it make?

Read next paragraph, “Yet, through...” thoughts?

Was God punishing Israel? Why or why not?

What is the punishment for sin? Is this punishment inflicted or is it the natural consequences?



When we see God act, directly in some way, is it punishment or therapeutic intervention?

Does it make a difference how we see it? What difference does it make?

SUNDAY

Read first two paragraphs, “In Micah 1:1-9...” thoughts?

The lesson takes the position that God is bringing “destructive judgment” and that is what Micah describes in these verses. Let’s read the verses and see what you think:

- 1** The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
- 2** Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it, that the Sovereign Lord may witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.
- 3** Look! The Lord is coming from his dwelling place; [where is his dwelling place?] he comes down and treads the high places of the earth.
- 4** The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.
- 5** All this is because of Jacob’s transgression, because of the sins of the house of Israel. What is Jacob’s transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah’s high place? Is it not Jerusalem?
- 6** “Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations.
- 7** All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.”
- 8** 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.
- 9** For her wound is incurable; it has come to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself.

Thoughts? What did you hear? Do you hear God threatening “destructive judgment”?

- Did God destroy any of the people?
- But did any of the people get destroyed?
- What or how did they get destroyed?
- Did the Babylonians destroy them?
- Did unremedied sin destroy them?

What did God say he would destroy?

- Isn’t God threatening to destroy lies, false gods, destructive ideas, distorted worship?



- For what purpose? To punish? Or to help free the minds of the people from eternal destruction?

So, is God punishing, or is God mercifully intervening to deliver and save?

When we recognize God built his universe to operate on love, and that selfishness and fear bring destruction – then we see God acting to counter selfishness and restore love. God is working like a doctor, to oppose infection, the infection of lies, fear, selfishness. Thus, when they are being damaged by false God concepts, rather than ignoring them, God intervenes to shake them out of their delusions and open the opportunity to see the truth.

This is mercy – it is not infliction of punishment for sin.

The punishment for sin is eternal non-existence and what causes this? Unremedied sin!

MONDAY

Read third paragraph, “One of the constant...” thoughts?

Several issues to discuss in this paragraph, what about the idea of divine retribution?

What does this language connote? Does it sound like a God who inflicts punishment? Does it sound arbitrary, in other words, that if God didn't inflict it they wouldn't experience it?

They mention that God warned them over and over in Deuteronomy that the blessings of God were dependent upon their obedience. This is absolutely true, but why?

- Does it mean, if you disobey I will kill, torture, harm,
- Or if you disobey you will take yourselves out of harmony with me and my methods and the result is ruin and death?
- In other words, does retribution mean inflicted externally or natural results?

If you hold an imposed law concept then what does retribution mean?

If you hold a natural law concept then what does retribution mean?

So before I read any other sources, thinking it through, knowing God's law is the law of love – then, what would you conclude retribution to be? The natural results of being out of harmony with God's design for life – NOT inflicted punishment.

Notice how retribution was used by one of the founders of our church:

Upon the slothful servant the sentence was, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents." Here, as in the reward of the faithful worker, is indicated not merely the reward at the final judgment **but the gradual process of retribution in this life. As**



in the natural, so in the spiritual world: every power unused will weaken and decay. Activity is the law of life; idleness is death. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1 Corinthians 12:7. **Employed to bless others, his gifts increase. Shut up to self-serving they diminish, and are finally withdrawn.** He who refuses to impart that which he has received will at last find that he has nothing to give. He is consenting to a process that surely dwarfs and finally destroys the faculties of the soul. {COL 364.1}

What kind of law is described in this paragraph? How is retribution used? Does retribution of this kind frighten you? Does it make you afraid of God?

Against every transgression of the laws of life, nature will utter her protest. She bears abuse as long as she can; **but finally the retribution comes, and it falls upon the mental as well as the physical powers.** Nor does it end with the transgressor; the effects of his indulgence are seen in his offspring, and thus the evil is passed down from generation to generation. {Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene 44.4}

All who indulge the appetite, waste the physical energies, and weaken the moral power, **will sooner or later feel the retribution that follows the transgression of physical law.** {CD 161.4}

Again, how is retribution used? What law is being described? What kind of God is behind such a system?

Jacob in his distress was not overwhelmed. He had repented, he had endeavored to atone for the wrong to his brother. And when threatened with death through the wrath of Esau, he sought help from God. "Yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication." "And He blessed him there." Hosea 12:4; Genesis 32:29. In the power of His might the forgiven one stood up, no longer the supplanter, but a prince with God. He had gained not merely deliverance from his outraged brother, **but deliverance from himself. The power of evil in his own nature was broken; his character was transformed.** {Ed 147.3}

The same experience is repeated in the history of Jacob's sons--sin working retribution, and repentance bearing fruit of righteousness unto life. {Ed 148.1}

God does not annul His laws. He does not work contrary to them. The work of sin He does not undo. But He transforms. Through His grace the curse works out blessing. {Ed 148.2}

How is retribution described? Do you agree – retribution is not inflicted but it is the natural result of rebellion against God's design for life?

What about the end of sin and sinners, retributive justice, will it be different?

Note this description from one of the founders of our church. Consider how much has changed over the last 150 in how we present things:



God has given to men **a declaration of his character, and of his method of dealing with sin.** “The Lord God, **merciful and gracious**, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**, and that will by no means clear the guilty.” [Exodus 34:6, 7.] “All the wicked will he destroy.” “The transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off.” [Psalm 145:20; 37:38.] **The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.** {GC88 541.2}

Okay – what does this mean? How do you hear it? Does it sound scary? Does it sound like God will use power to inflict torment and punishment?

Think about what kind of law God’s government and universe are built upon, then consider the meaning of the passage. Before I read what comes next, what would you anticipate? A description of a system like human courts in which God inflicts punishment, or a system in which sinners are themselves out of harmony with God’s design and thus suffer from their terminal condition?

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. **He desires that the creatures of his hands shall love him because he is worthy of love.** [Can this happen if God is threatening to torture and kill those who don’t love Him? Can God get this with imposed law?] He would have them obey him because they have an intelligent appreciation of his wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love him because they are drawn toward him in admiration of his attributes. {GC88 541.3} [Does understanding the law of love as God’s design for life draw you to love him more? But what happens if we have, instead of just conceptions of God’s qualities, have false ideas and see God as imposer of law and punisher?]

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God... The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, “Love your enemies.” [what kind of law is described, imposed, or design protocols, principles?] God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom his judgments are visited. He would make them happy if he could do so in accordance with the laws of his government and the justice of his character. He surrounds them with the tokens of his love, he grants them a knowledge of his law, and follows them with the offers of his mercy; but they despise his love, make void his law, and reject his mercy. While constantly receiving his gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that he abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive hour will come at last, **when their destiny is to be decided.** [what is described? How is God acting? Who decides their destiny] Will he then chain these rebels to his side? Will he force them to do his will? {GC88 542.1}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader, and have been controlled by his power, **are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** [Why are they this way? What causes it? And what is the result of having character fixed like this? Is this describing imposed punishment, or natural



result?] Can they enter Heaven, to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could Heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC88 542.2}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to Heaven, and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,— every soul filled with love; every countenance beaming with joy; enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb; and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—**could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb?—No, no; [Why not? Is God unwilling? Is God angry? Does God have a rule which requires Him to inflict punishment upon them because they failed to do the right ritual, be baptized in the right way, confess the forgotten sin, claim the blood of Jesus?]** years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for Heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of Heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for Heaven. [Why are they not in heaven? They are unfit, is this imposed, or natural] Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from Heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.** {GC88 542.3}

Like the waters of the flood, the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. {GC88 542.4} **[What is described? What is retributive justice here executed by God? An infliction of arbitrary power to torture? Or the reaping of the natural results of persist violation of God's design for life?**

Do many Christians today believe that divine retribution is imposed? And that we are protected from it by accepting Jesus' payment for our sin? Then are such Christians in danger of believing that because they have accepted Jesus they are free from divine retribution – i.e. the natural results of breaking God's design for life?

- How about how many don't think lifestyle choices matter because Jesus paid their sin debt – we can eat whatever...
- How many think they can watch whatever they want, because they accepted Jesus as their Savior?
- How many think there is no retribution, consequence, for worshipping an angry, wrathful god?

TUESDAY

Read Micah 5:2-4 – thoughts?



Read second paragraph, “Out of a little...” thoughts?

When does Jesus “rule” begin? Did he rule when he came to earth?

Does Jesus rule on earth right now? What prevent Jesus from ruling on earth now? Is it Satan that stops him from ruling or something else?

Could it be Jesus doesn’t rule on earth now because we are ready for his rule?

What do you think of this perspective from Christ Object Lessons:

Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. **When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.** {COL 69.1}

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain. {COL 69.2}

Is this consistent with what Peter wrote about God not delaying his return but not wanting any to be lost?

What prevents Christ’s character from being reproduced in his people? Could it be persistent lies about God and his law taught within the church?

Read last paragraph, “As incomprehensible as it is...” thoughts?

It really is incomprehensible that the Creator became human – what does such a thing do for you?

I received an email last week from someone who asked, why did it have to be Jesus, why not a perfect angel come to earth and be sacrificed for our sin – thoughts?

- Who are Satan’s allegations against?
- What would we learn about God if an angel died with the intent to save us?
- Could an angel become human?
- Did it require a human to be victorious in order to save mankind?
- Why Jesus instead of the Father?

THURSDAY

Read first two paragraphs, “Micah’s book begins...” thoughts?



What do you think they mean by “There are people who try to explain away or deny the reality of God’s judgments?”

- Are they talking about Universalism? That in the end everyone will be saved?
- Or are they talking about Theistic Evolution – God created it, wound it up, but now lets it run itself. He isn’t involved?
- Or are they talking about the idea that God’s judgments are not punishments but therapeutic interventions?

Do we deny God’s judgments? Or do we understand them in the context of His character and law of love?

Does it make a difference which lens one is looking through?

When they say “God’s justice is the other side of his love and concern.” What do you hear?

Is God two-faced? As Graham Maxwell used to say, will Jesus come back with love on his face for the righteous and an angry scowl on his face for the wicked? Does God have two faces? Or is God love?

Is God any less love to the wicked as to the righteous? What makes the difference? The attitude of God or the condition of the one interacting with God?

Is punishment “God’s word”? Or is “punishment” the result of breaking God’s word?

Think about it – God’s word creates, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.” PS 33:6

God’s Word was made flesh – God’s Word is Life – God’s Word Creates – it is the violation of God’s word, the breaking of God’s law, the transgression of God’s design for life, the deviation from the protocols upon which life is built and that results in punishment!

How diabolical – to attribute to God’s word the punishment that comes from the transgression of God’s word.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, “The prophet declares...” thoughts? What is justice according to Scripture?

Do you see how answering this question determines what kind of person one becomes?

If God is an imposer of law and thus God’s justice is inflicted punishment upon the oppressor – then we have religions like:

- Christianity in the Dark Ages – crusades, inquisition, burning at the stake



- Islam – intolerance of freedom of conscience, kill people who convert, kill people or treat your ideas and beliefs with what you consider to be profane
- Judaism which crucifies the innocent Lord
- Nations which hunt down and kill offenders

But when one sees God as the Builder, the Designer, the One who constructed the universe to operate upon the law of love – then one sees deviations are destructive and God’s justice is delivering the oppressed and healing the damage caused by sin and oppression. In that case we have religions like:

- Jesus – giving life for others
- Marion and Barbie Fisher – the Amish girls who stood up and asked to be shot first in order to protect their friends
- Kent Whitaker who forgave his son for having his wife and family killed
- Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison, delivering the oppressed

Thus God’s justice is realized at the second coming when the dead are raised, the sick are healed, the abused are delivered, the broken are restored, and the persistently rebellious are mercifully set free to their ultimate end.

Read bottom pink section, “Why is it easier to keep Sabbath strictly than it is to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God?”

Thoughts?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 2, 3