



2017 Q3 The The Least of These - Lesson 5 The Cry of the Prophets

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SABBATH

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8 [NKJV]

- What is a prophet?
- Is there any difference between OT prophets and any in the present day?
- What did they “cry”? Is a contemporary prophet “crying” anything different?
- What is justice??
- What does it mean to “love mercy”?
- How does one walk “humbly” with God?
- Why does the Lord “require” these things of mankind?
- What is the solid thread running throughout all of the OT prophets’ books, and all of Scripture, for that matter??

From the lesson:

“As we will see, too, that among the sins and evils that they warned the leaders and people against, one of the biggest was the oppression of the poor, the needy, the helpless among them. Yes, worshiping idols was bad; yes, following false religious practices was bad; but, yes, taking advantage of the weak and poor was worthy of condemnation, as well.”

Was oppression of the poor the disease or a symptom of a disease?

What was the real problem??

Was it “worthy of condemnation”? Did God condemn the children of Israel for this, or did He go to great lengths to heal them?

SUNDAY

The Recurring Call to Justice.

The lesson references Israel’s demand for a king in 1 Samuel 8. Consider the broader context first.

Samuel had appointed his sons to function as priests [read – church leadership] in his stead but they “did not follow his ways” and they accepted bribes [read – used tithes for personal gain] and perverted justice [read – compliance committees]. The citizens of Israel then demanded a king.



Is it too much of a stretch to wonder that if Samuel's sons had been true to their father's [literal and figurative] character, then Israel would have been less likely to demand a king "such as the other nations have"??

God correctly diagnoses their condition and makes it clear that Israel is rejecting Him and not Samuel.

MONDAY

Amos

From the lesson:

"He [Amos] begins on a popular note, listing off the surrounding nations— Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, and Moab—and detailing their crimes, outrages, and atrocities for which God will punish them [Ed: Really??] (see Amos 1:3–2:3). It is easy to imagine the Israelites applauding these indictments of their enemies, particularly as many of the crimes of these nations had been directed against the Israelites themselves."

And again:

"Then Amos moves a little closer to home, declaring God's judgment against the people of Judah, Israel's southern neighbors in the now-separated kingdoms. Speaking on behalf of God, Amos cites their rejection of God, their disobedience to His commands, and the punishments that would come to them [Ed: Really??] (see Amos 2:4, 5)."

Anyone see a pattern here??

TUESDAY

Micah

The lesson recommends we read Micah 2 & 3 to gain some context for the state of Israel and Judah. Here are some tidbits.

Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.

They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud people of their homes, they rob them of their inheritance. Micah 2: 2.

Then I said, "Listen, you LEADERS of Jacob, you RULERS of Israel. Should you not embrace justice, you who hate good and love evil . . . Micah 3: 1. [emphasis mine]

Hear this, you LEADERS of Jacob, you RULERS of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness . . . Micah 3: 9. [emphasis mine]



Consider the verses preceding our memory text:

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God??
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased
with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”
Micah 6: 6, 7 NKJV.

God is calling out LEADERSHIP. NATIONAL and CHURCH leadership. They are the ones
misrepresenting His character to their populace. The rank and file citizens take their cues from
leadership. This is why our leaders need to adhere, and be held to a higher standard.

In the bottom section the lesson asks a great question.

“What is the link between doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly before God?”

Any thoughts??

WEDNESDAY

Ezekiel

Check out Ezekiel 4 and wonder at the lengths God and Ezekiel went to in order to capture the
attention and arrest the course of the children of Israel.

- Build a copy of the city of Jerusalem and lay siege to it.
- Lie on left side for 390 days. Let that breathe.
- Lie on right side for 40 days.
- Cook food with human dung. Animal dung when Ezekiel protested.

Marvel at the patience and commitment.

From the lesson:

“Interestingly enough, though, the answer is more complicated than just that. Consider Ezekiel’s
description: “ ‘ “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were
arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy” ’ ” (Ezek. 16:49,
NIV). Though clearly the Lord was not going to overlook the other forms of depravity found in
the city, Ezekiel’s focus here was on economic injustice and a lack of care for those in need.
Could it be that, in the eyes of God, these economic sins were just as bad as the sexual ones?”

Could it be that the economic and sexual depravity are related? Linked? Connected? Symptomatic?
Could it be that they hold hands and skip across meadows together?



Why do you think the lesson chose to focus on Ezekiel's lack of focus on Sodom's "sexual" sins??
We may need a compliance committee to look in to this . . .

See where this idiocy [the focus on behaviors, i.e. symptoms, instead of the heart condition, i.e. the disease] leads??

THURSDAY

Isaiah

"Come now, and let us reason together", says the Lord, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1:18.

Is this, and texts like it, what you think of when you remember the prophet Isaiah?

Do you think of the countless messianic passages, or do you think of God's "anger" and the impending doom on Israel and Judah? What about the preceding texts?

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats.

"When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts?

Bring no more futile sacrifices Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil,

Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. Isa. 1: 11-17 NKJV.