

**International Sunday School Lesson**  
**Study Notes**  
**July 19, 2015**

**Lesson Text: Micah 6:3-8**

**Lesson Title: Justice, Love, and Humility**

**Introduction**

What has been called “the definition of religious duty” in any generation, the words of Micah 6:8, is the focus of our study today. No one doubts what Micah commands here, “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God,” is the answer to most of the world’s problems. “Justice, loving mercy, and humility” are the very things the world is trying so desperately to find. Yet, in their spiritual blindness they are going to all the wrong places and looking to all the wrong people in an attempt to find it.

Any serious, honest person will recognize the magnificence of Micah’s words. But having established that these qualities are what God requires, where do we go from here? If we are honest, we must admit that we all fall short of what God expects. Where does that leave us? Do we simply continue to say, “Yes, Micah’s words are magnificent,” and leave it at that? Or, do we search deeply into Micah’s words, recognizing our inability to do what God requires, and confess our sin and trust Christ for forgiveness?

What God requires, Justice, loving mercy, and humility can only be found in Jesus Christ. You do not have to be just, kind, and humble to earn Christ; he came to die on the cross because you are not just, kind, and humble. If you try and fail, he forgives you. That is the good news of the Gospel. As we study God’s indictment of Israel, her response, and hear again the requirement “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God,” remember, Christ came to this earth for you and to do for you what you cannot be or do yourself!

**The Lord Indicts (Micah 6:3-5)**

The language of Micah 6:1-2 sets the stage for a courtroom scene. The “*mountains*” are called as witnesses to hear the case. They are the silent spectators of all that happened through the years between God, the plaintiff in this case, and His people, the accused.

God invites His people to “*contend*” (Micah 6:1) or plead their case. This is a familiar Old Testament pattern in God’s dealings with Israel (Isaiah 1:18; Hosea 12:2). God is not interested in shaming Israel or just winning a court case. It was God’s desire that through the words of His prophets He might gain the ear of His people. He wanted them to come back and talk things over with Him, to realize where they had erred, and repent.

Through Micah, God's indictment against Israel is based on the events of the past, things the people knew well. However, before the Lord appeals to what He has done for them, He wants to find out the reasons for their feelings toward Him.

### Verse 3

O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

The words "O my people" once again reminds us that no matter how grievously God's people had treated Him, He still treated them as His people. "What have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee" are questions from God to the nation. Both questions indicate the people were tired of God, but they could not bring themselves to openly tell that to the Lord. God says, "testify against me," or "answer me."

God knew how the people felt yet He gives them a chance to make known their grievances against him. First, He asks, "What have I done unto thee?" that is, what accusations do you have against me? Second, He asks, "Wherein have I wearied thee?" that is, in what way have I been a troublesome to you? Through Jeremiah the prophet, the Lord appealed, "*Thus saith the LORD, What iniquities have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?*" (Jeremiah 2:5).

What did it mean to be "weary" of God? Simply that God was a burden to them. They were tired of worship (Malachi 3:1). They were tired of prayer (Isaiah 43:22). Serving the Lord had become a hardship, an inconvenience. Was it God's fault they were "weary?" No. The fault was theirs, not God's.

*Question: Why do people get tired of serving the Lord? Why do they find it a burden to be faithful in worship and Christian service? Where do you place your blame?*

### Verse 4

"For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."

The first solution to weariness in worship and serving the Lord is to remember what God has done for you. "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants..." The word "redeemed" would remind the people of the slaying of the Passover lambs so the oldest son in the family would not be killed (Exodus 12:3, 7, 12-13). God takes the people back to their life of slavery in Egypt. He reminded them of what was without

question their greatest day in history. He brought them “up” and “out” of “the land of Egypt.” Nothing less than the miraculous power of God was responsible for their redemption.

The Psalmist said, *“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD”* (Psalm 40:2-3). If you are a Christian the psalmist has just described what happened to you when you were saved by God’s grace. When you become weary think about your redemption from sin.

The second solution to weariness in worship and serving the Lord is to remember the leadership God has provided for you. “...and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” “God’s mention of ‘Moses’ would remind the people of the Law, and the name of ‘Aaron’ would bring to mind the priesthood. Perhaps ‘Miriam’ is mentioned because her name would bring to mind her song to the Lord (Exodus 15:21) and her role as a prophetess (Exodus 15:20). Because Moses represented God to man and Aaron represented man to God, the people had a unique relationship with the Lord.” *(The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.)*

The Hebrew writer said, *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation”* (Hebrews 13:7). If we think back and look closely we will find many people God has placed in our lives to lead and help us grow in our Christian life. Remembering our salvation as well as those who have led and ministered to us will help keep us from becoming weary in worship and service.

### Verse 5

“O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.”

God had not only brought His people out of slavery in Egypt and provided leaders for them, God had taken care of all their needs in bringing them into a land of their own and in establishing government and worship. Again, God wants them to “remember.”

God had blessed Israel in spite of their enemies intentions to destroy them. “Remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal.” The phrase “from Shittim unto Gilgal” is a reference to the people of Israel’s crossing of the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land. “Shittim” was the last camping spot before the

children of Israel entered Moab. Gilgal was the first place they camped when they go to the Promised Land.

In order for the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land they had to travel around Edom because Edom would not let them pass through their land (Numbers 20:18-21). God led them around Edom, and then to Moab. The king of Moab at that time was “Balak.” “Balak” was afraid of the Israelites because of their God, their power, and their size. He wanted to curse the children of Israel, so he hired a prophet named “Balaam” to curse them. “Balaam” was a prophet who seemed to have information from God but he loved money. “Balak” took “Balaam” up to a mountain where he could look down on the camp of Israel. “Balaam” said, “*How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?*” (Numbers 23:8). The children of Israel had no idea one of their enemies was attempting to curse them. God protected them and did not permit His children to be cursed. God wanted them to remember this event.

“That ye may know the righteousness of the LORD” means that Israel would know the Lord was right in whatever He did. Everything God did for Israel, His redemption, His leadership provided through Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, His protection from enemies known and unknown, all proved He was just, merciful, and upright.

God is indicting Israel and questioning Israel as to why she is wearied with Him. What has He done? Did He not redeem them from Egypt? Did He not give them leadership to make it to Canaan? Had they forgotten how He kept a prophet for hire from cursing them? God wants them to remember and return unto Him. He wants you to also remember His grace and mercy to you and your family.

*Note: In an age when more professing Christians are spending less time in corporate and private worship, Micah’s words must be heeded. Corporately and individually, we will dry up spiritually if we forget God’s redemption, gifts of leadership to us and our family, and His protection from our enemies. Remember!*

### **The People Reply (Micah 6:6-7)**

Most likely there was a divine pause between verse 5 and verse 6. The people, apparently convicted by God’s indictment and questions, reflected upon their answers recorded in verses 6-7. Micah, as though speaking on behalf of the people, asked rhetorically how, in light of God’s faithfulness toward them, they could continue their hypocrisy by being outwardly religious but inwardly sinful. He takes up the case by framing the thoughts of the Israelites in the form of questions about what God wants. Then He gives God’s answer in verse 8.

#### Verse 6

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?”

Micah, speaking on behalf of Israel, is asking how they should approach the Lord and what they should bring as sacrifice. His question centers around the Old Testament sacrificial system. The sacrificial system was of course an integral part of their worship.

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God” is asking, “What do we need to do that we are not doing?” There seems to be a note of attempting to bargain with God or seeing if there was something more they could do to be right with Him. They asked if they should “come with burnt offerings,” and “with calves of a year old.” The “burnt offerings” were sin offerings and the “calves of a year old” were considered to be the best offering possible. The offering of “calves of a year old” were normally offered for a priest (Leviticus 9:2-3). For the Israelite to bring an offering normally offered for a priest would signify great sacrifice.

The people are trying to reason in their minds if they can be right with God by doing more in the area of sacrifice and offerings. Unfortunately, that is not the answer to Israel’s problem. It is not the answer to any man’s problem. People came to the Lord Jesus and asked, “*What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*” (John 6:28-29).

### Verse 7

“Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

The people continue to ask if the Lord would “be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Is it possible God would want “my firstborn” to cover for “my transgression?” The law claimed the first-born of man and beast for the Lord (Exodus 13:2, 12). However, the sacrifice of children was forbidden (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10). This was meaningful to the Israelites because they were surrounded by nations who offered human sacrifices to their gods, Baal and Molech.

God does not want you to double up on your offerings or offer your “firstborn” as a sacrifice to cover “the sin of your soul.” The psalmist said, “*For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*” (Psalm 51:16-17).

Over and over the prophets had rebuked God’s people for the hypocrisy behind their sacrifices and offerings. God would have nothing to do with sacrifice and

offerings as long as the people had hearts full of unconfessed sin. It is easy to do a little more, give a little more and create the appearance of being right with God and each other. But God knew their hearts. The sacrificial system was not an end in itself.

### **The Prophet Requires (Micah 6:8)**

The answer to Israel's question then was not more outward sacrifice, but those inner qualities of heart and mind that made the required sacrifices valid. What does God look for in the lives of His people?

#### Verse 8

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

“He hath shewed thee, O man” means Israel had been told how to live and how to walk. She knew what God required, but by implication refused to do what she knew to do. Sounds familiar does it not? How often do we sin willfully, refusing to humble ourselves?

Micah was not laying aside the purpose and requirements of the sacrificial system. He was not asking the people to stop bringing their sacrifices and offerings. He wanted the people to understand the surest proof of their relationship to the Lord was a life of “justice, mercy, and humility.”

First, God requires justice. God wants His people to be fair in their dealings with others. The Lord wants us live a life beyond reproach. Be fair, honest, and deal appropriately with our fellow man (Ezekiel 18:5, 9). No cheating, cutting corners, or favoritism; treating all people alike.

Second, God requires mercy. This means God wants His people to love His mercy and be merciful in dealing with others (Romans 12:8). No strings attached to our love (Luke 10:30-37).

Third, God requires humility. This means “to be modest.” It means we accept what God has revealed about us. A humble person is one who does not call attention to themselves. To be humble is to walk as Noah and Enoch. In all our relationships in life we must be emptied of pride and arrogance. We must think highly of the Lord and not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Romans 12:3; Philippians 2:3).

### **Conclusion**

Try to imagine what a different world it would be if everyone lived by Micah 6:8. Is that possible? The answer is no, not in ourselves. Then what do we do with

God's requirements? Do we ignore it because we know we cannot live it? Do we attempt to do the best we can and hope God will somehow credit our efforts toward our righteousness? The answer to each of these questions is no.

God wants His people to prove we have a saving relationship with Him by reflecting His character. There is no better way to reflect God's character than through justice, mercy, and humility. These were the best evidences of genuine faith.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord and the power of His resurrection life within us, we can live a life of justice, mercy, and humility. Israel could never meet God's requirements by just performing the *externals* of sacrifices and offerings. They must have an *inward* desire to do what the Lord required. The same is true of us. Our relationship with Jesus Christ affects every relationship we have. Sacrifices and offerings were at set times and in set places. Justice, love, and humility are daily!

Amen.