

# What God Hates (Part 1)

Micah 1:1-7 on July 28, 2024

Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

*Please read Micah 1:1-7 before going further in this transcript.*

The structure of Micah's 7 chapters aren't laid out for us quite as clearly as the storyline of the prophet Jonah, or the question/answer exchange between Habakkuk and Yahweh. Therefore, rather than trying to build our 4-wk. sermon series around a particular outline of the chapters/verses, we're going to focus on some of the key theological themes that are scattered throughout. Our overarching big idea will be to consider "What God Hates, and What He Delights In." We'll consider 2 weeks on each:

- > The first 2 weeks will be on What God Hates, followed by
- > the second 2 weeks on What He Delights In.

**If we are truly devoted to God's love and goodness, then we must learn to hate what God hates.**

But is it ever ok to hate? I know that many of us who are parents, have told our children that it's never ok to hate, but the Bible challenges this idea. Romans 12:9 instructs Christ-followers to "...Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." Psalm 97:10 agrees, "Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked."<sup>1</sup> New Testament scholar Tom Schreiner explains it this way: "True virtue is not passive about evil but has an intense revulsion against it. Evil is not tolerated but is despised as that which is [harmful] and wicked."<sup>2</sup> New Testament scholar John Stott says it this way: "[Love] is discerning. It is so passionately devoted to the object being loved, that it hates every evil which is incompatible."<sup>3</sup> Pastor Timothy Keller said it this way: "Our love must operate on the basis of God's moral order. We must 'hate (literally 'be horrified' by) what God calls evil, and we must 'cling...to what God calls good. ...We cannot love rightly without hating rightly."<sup>4</sup> So how about you and me? Do we hate "What God Hates"? Or... are we a bit more... lenient?

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Amos 5:14-15; and 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22. Back in the late 1980s, the rock band Mylon LeFevre & Broken Heart released a song titled, "Love God, Hate Sin." Check it out here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjSIOLmcpxA>

<sup>2</sup> 'Where there is love, evil is abhorred, not merely lamented, much less covered up, but HATED.' Citing Schlatter at the end, Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, p. 645.

<sup>3</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans, Rev. Ed.*, IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1994, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *Romans 8-16 For You*, Good Book Co., India, 2015, p. 118.

So what exactly does God hate? Well, for one thing...

**1) God hates idolatry (anything we prioritize over Him).<sup>5</sup>**

Micah 1:1-2 begins, “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, you peoples, all of you, listen, earth and all who live in it, that the Sovereign LORD may bear witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.”

Micah’s message is not just for Samaria and Jerusalem; his message is for *all* peoples, all the earth, everyone who lives in it. And we not only need to hear this message, we need to understand it and then respond appropriately.<sup>6</sup> From His holy temple,<sup>7</sup> the God of the universe is giving testimony against the sin in the world. He’s bringing His indictment on all the earth, and He’s concerned enough about it, to come down from His holy dwelling place, and to directly intervene.<sup>8 9</sup>

Verses 3-4 go on, “Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place; he comes down and treads on the heights 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.” The Divine Warrior is coming to judge the people’s sin, because He hates sin! He hates anything that is opposed to His good and perfect will. He hates that which is outside of His good and loving design. God’s perfect righteousness demands justice, which means that He must punish any transgression of His holy and sovereign ways.<sup>10</sup>

Verse 5 continues... “All this is because of Jacob’s transgression, because of the sins of the people of Israel. What is Jacob’s [*i.e. Israel’s*] transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah’s high place? Is it not Jerusalem?” (*Judah’s “high place” refers to idol worship; we’ll come back to this.*) Samaria and Jerusalem were the capital cities of Israel and Judah, respectively. So Micah is writing during the time of the divided kingdom, when the Israelites were split into 2 groups. This was also during the time in history when the Assyrians were advancing from the north and the east. Samaria was the capital of the 10 northern tribes of Israel (which was also another name for Jacob).<sup>11</sup> Jerusalem was the capital of the 2 southern tribes of Judah. These 2 particular capital cities were representative of all of God’s people living in these regions. And God is calling out their sin, together.

---

<sup>5</sup> Collins dictionary defines idolatry as “excessive devotion to or reverence for some person or thing.” <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/idolatry>

<sup>6</sup> See Kenneth L. Barker, New American Commentary: Micah, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, pp. 48-49.

<sup>7</sup> See Isaiah 6:1-5.

<sup>8</sup> See Kenneth L. Barker, New American Commentary: Micah, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> God does not remain transcendent, He is immanent, making His presence known.

<sup>10</sup> God will not allow His good creation to be marred by sin; He won’t ignore sin’s evil and ugly stain upon the world He has made.

<sup>11</sup> As in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Israel being the new name that God gave to Jacob. See Genesis 35:10.

Micah begins by focusing mostly on Samaria's sin, and then he moves on in the rest of his book to focus on Jerusalem's sin. You see, partway through Micah's lifetime, the tribes in the north were taken into captivity by the Assyrians. God's punishment on Samaria and Israel in the north, was meant to serve as a warning to Jerusalem and Judah in the south. In fact, Samaria isn't mentioned again after chapter 1 except in terms of any refugees who may have fled south into Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> God's punishment on sin wasn't limited to Samaria though, it included Jerusalem. Micah 1:9,12 says, "For Samaria's plague is incurable; it has spread to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself.... [Verse 12 clarifies] ...disaster has come from the LORD, even to the gate of Jerusalem."

To be clear, this plague isn't some infectious disease like the Spanish Influenza or Covid-19, it is MUCH more serious! This is God's holy, righteous, and terrible punishment of sin. God is executing His judgment on sin through the Assyrian armies which were sweeping down through both the northern and the southern kingdoms. Why is this happening? Verse 5 just told us, "...because of the sins of the people...."

Verses 6-7 then specify what kind of sin: "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." Verse 7 mentions the wages of prostitutes, but this isn't just referring to physical prostitution; more importantly it refers to religious prostitution. God's people were cheating on him by worshipping other gods. The wages of prostitutes refer to the money that they were making through idol worship, and through the making and selling of the gold and silver artifacts that people would buy, and then bow down to.<sup>13</sup>

When verse 6 refers to pouring her stones into the valley, it's a picture of Samaria located up on a high hill, some 300 feet above the surrounding lands. The city thought it was safe and secure, resting up on its high and lofty perch, but the Assyrians climbed right through their walls, and then broke them into pieces. They poured the stones down into the valley one

---

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth L. Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> "Prostitution is often an Old Testament symbol for idolatry or spiritual unfaithfulness... The wealth that Samaria had gained from her idolatry will be taken by the Assyrians and placed in their own temples, to be used again in the worship of idols." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1502 footnote on Micah 1:7.

by one until the foundations of the city were laid bare.<sup>14 15</sup> Disaster had come from the LORD because He hates idolatry! Idolatry is one of the key reasons why God came down from His holy temple and judged their sin. And God's people should have known better; they'd known it from at least as far back as Exodus 20:1-3, "And God spoke all these words: 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me." So God's people were well aware that GOD, HATES, IDOLATRY.

God didn't just hate idolatry back then though; He still hates it today. It's easy for us to read these Old Testament passages and think to ourselves, "well, I'm sure glad that I've never practiced idolatry. I know I've never gone to a pagan temple or bowed down to an idol." But idolatry takes many different forms, and it's often not a literal golden statue to which we bow down. Idolatry is anything that we prioritize over and above God; anything that invites us to love it, more than we love God. So all of this begs the question: Are there any idols which have crept into your life? Has anything become more important than God, more feared and revered by you, than God Himself?

A comprehensive list of all of our possible idols would be impossible. Our idol could be money, pleasure, or power. Or it could be comfort, safety, or security. Or any number of a thousand other things. Regardless, whatever idol may have crept into our lives, God hates it. Two of the more common idols in our current day and age are money and politics. There's a strong tendency among Christ-followers today to look to money and politics for our answers, rather than looking to God. We get so caught up them, that before we know it, they become more important than God. They begin to have a greater impact on our priorities, and on our decision making, than God Himself. Money and politics often control how we spend our time, and where we spend our energy; even where we find our purpose and meaning in life. If we're not careful, we might begin to place more faith and trust in the mighty dollar, and in a compelling political solution or government leader, than we do in the Living God, (*the God who provides for all of our needs, and who rules and reigns from His throne above*). Without even noticing it, our allegiance to God can be corrupted by putting too much of our time and emphasis on what's going on in our bank accounts, and what's going on in this year's election. Friends, if this describes us in any way, then we need to repent!

---

<sup>14</sup> "The site provided an ideal location for a nearly impregnable capital city for the northern kingdom. ...Archaeologists have discovered that Omri and Ahab also adorned it with magnificent structures to rival those Solomon had erected in Jerusalem. From this time on, the northern kingdom could be designated by the name of the royal city, just as the southern kingdom could be designated by its capital, Jerusalem." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 2011, p. 550 footnote on 1 Kings 16:24.

<sup>15</sup> This happened when Assyria destroyed Samaria in ~722 BC.

**If we are truly devoted to God's love and goodness, then we must learn to hate what God hates.**

Micah opened his book by mentioning the reign of 3 particular kings: Jotham<sup>16</sup>, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. King Hezekiah was by far the best of the three, and when he came to power he did his best to make some much-needed reforms. But before his reign, Jotham and Ahaz made quite a mess. A second things that God hates is...

**2) God hates rebellion against His ways.**

2 Kings 15:34-35 records this regarding Jotham's reign, "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done. 35 The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there."<sup>17</sup> These "high places" are referring to locations where God's people performed their pagan worship practices. This idolatry likely included not only worshipping other gods in these places, but also the sin of syncretism, which is mixing idolatrous pagan worship practices into their worship of Yahweh.<sup>18 19</sup> So as much as Jotham did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, he didn't hate what God hated. He didn't hate idolatry enough to remove the high places, and in this regard, he rebelled against God's ways.

King Ahaz came next, and his reign was loaded with all kinds of rebellion against God's ways. 2 Kings 16:2-4 records this about Ahaz's reign, "...he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God. 3 He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire,<sup>20</sup> engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. 4 He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree." My *Study Bible* has a helpful note here: "These high places appear to be those assimilated from pagan Baal worship and used by those who worshiped Baal even while also worshipping the Lord. ...Large trees were viewed as symbols of fertility... Immoral pagan rites were performed at shrines located under such trees. Contrary to the explicit prohibition of the Mosaic covenant, the Israelites adopted this pagan custom."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> "JOH thuhm" W. Murray Severance and Terry Eddinger, *That's Easy for You to Say: Your Quick Guide to Pronouncing Bible Names* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 97.

<sup>17</sup> Apparently, these were "assimilated from pagan Baal worship and used for the worship of the LORD in a syncretistic fashion." Kenneth L. Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> And not just worshipping Yahweh with pagan practices, but also IN pagan places, where pagan altars were used rather than altars dedicated to the Lord. See note on 1 Kings 3:2, pp. 517-518, *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> See Numbers 33:52 and Deuteronomy 7:5-6; 12:2-7.

<sup>20</sup> See Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

<sup>21</sup> *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 598 footnote on 2 Kings 16:4.

So rather than following God's ways, they followed the ways of their human kings. Rebellion against God's ways corrupted His people in both the northern and southern kingdoms. And eventually, the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed. 2 Kings 17:5-6 records, "The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria...."

We're then given a broad historical summary in verses 7 and following, "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt... They worshiped other gods 8 and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced." Jumping to verses 13-14, "The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, [*My ways, not your ways.*] in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." 14 But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the LORD their God."

And then, God's people suffered the most tragic consequence our sins can possibly produce... Verses 18-20 declare, "So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, 19 and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. 20 Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence."<sup>22 23 24 25</sup> God hates rebellion against His ways, which is why you and I need to learn to hate rebellion.

---

<sup>22</sup> Consider Isaiah 10:5 but also Leviticus 26:40-45.

<sup>23</sup> Old Testament scholar Kenneth Barker summarizes 2 Kings 17 this way: "The reasons [the northern kingdom of Israel fell] include sin, ingratitude and spurning God's grace, idolatry and polytheism, pagan practices, worshipping at high places and sacred stones and Asherah poles, ritual prostitution, stubbornness, covenant breaking, the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, astral cults, worshipping the Canaanite god Baal, sacrificing sons and daughters to the Ammonite god Molech, divination, and sorcery." Kenneth L. Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> There was a point in Ahaz's reign when the prophet "Isaiah confronted him with the issue of faith and the prophecy of Immanuel "God with us," but Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser for help [*instead*] and gave him the temple treasure." Kenneth L. Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> See Isaiah 7:1-17 and 2 Kings 16:7-18.

### 3) God hates falsehood, and the perversion of true religion.<sup>26 27</sup>

Micah brought his message as God's true prophet, but he was rejected by the false prophets of his day. Micah 2:6-7 records the deception of these false prophets, "Do not prophesy," their prophets say. "Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us." 7 You descendants of Jacob, should it be said, "Does the LORD become impatient? Does he do such things?" ... In other words, the false prophets were insisting that Micah's negative message can't be from God. "We're fine! God doesn't get impatient; He doesn't plan disaster against His own people!"<sup>28</sup>

A few verses later, God describes the kind of prophets that the people preferred to listen to. In Micah 2:11 God says, "If a liar and deceiver comes and says, 'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,' that would be just the prophet for this people!" 2 Timothy 4:3-4 comes to mind, "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." You see, some people don't hate what God hates.<sup>29</sup>

Well, the evil King Ahaz was eventually replaced by his son, the righteous King Hezekiah, who engaged in sweeping reforms to restore true religion. There's a summary of his reign recorded in 2 Kings 18, verses 1-4 begin... "In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. ...3 He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. [*Notice how he isn't compared with his father Azah here.*] 4 He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles." You see, King Hezekiah hated what God hated! So he removed what was sinful; he smashed it and cut it down! Friends, are we willing to deal with the sin in our own personal lives this directly? Are we willing to smash down our idols, and cut them out of our lives completely?

---

<sup>26</sup> "[Micah] is particularly shocked at the perversion of true religion. God was being represented one-sidedly as a benevolent and forgiving deity, perpetually blessing in grandfatherly fashion. Sinners were being comforted by such easy doctrines." Leslie C. Allen, *NICOT: The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976, p. 255.

<sup>27</sup> Consider James 1:26-27.

<sup>28</sup> Isaiah was a contemporary of Micah, check out Isaiah 5:20, "those who call evil good and good evil."

<sup>29</sup> Several chapters later, we find a description of the kind of true religion that the LORD requires. Micah 6:6-8 says, "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 olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has shown you, O mortal, 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."

Let me be clear on something here, I'm NOT suggesting that anyone should go out and start smashing things in our community, or cutting down something offensive in our neighbor's yard. Please, hear me on this: we're addressing our own personal sin. So, if we're going to smash anything, or cut anything down, it should only be our own stuff.<sup>30 31</sup>

Verses 5-7 go on, "...Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. 6 He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. 7 And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him." Right around the time that King Hezekiah was establishing his reign in the southern kingdom of Judah, Israel's northern kingdom was being deported to Assyria.<sup>32</sup> But even though Assyria eventually captured a major portion of the southern kingdom of Judah, they didn't capture Jerusalem. (*2 Kings 19 records the miraculous story of God wiping out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers outside the gates of Jerusalem!*)<sup>33</sup> So the righteous King Hezekiah did his best to set aside falsehood and to return Judah to the true religion that had been perverted. It wasn't until more than 100 years later that the Babylonians came to power, and eventually they conquered the southern kingdom of Judah and took them into captivity. But this was the result of the sins and rebellion of a different king, and a whole different generation of God's people.

You see, each generation has to make its own decision: Will we hate what God hates, or will we tolerate the presence of sin in our lives? Will we follow the Lord, or will we NOT follow the Lord? Micah 7:7 declares, "But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me."<sup>34</sup> Joshua 24:15 comes to mind, "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

---

<sup>30</sup> See Acts 19:18-19, and consider 2 Chronicles 15:16.

<sup>31</sup> Charlie Hall's song comes to mind, "Give Us Clean Hands."

<https://www.google.com/search?q=give+us+clean+hands+lyrics&rlz=>

<sup>32</sup> See 2 Kings 18:1 footnote, p. 603, and summary on pp. 594-595 of the *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> See 2 Kings 19:35-36 where the angel of the Lord fought for them, and put to death 185,000 Assyrians soldiers in a single night. King Sennacherib of the Assyrians then went back to Nineveh and Jerusalem was spared.

<sup>34</sup> Micah's hope was not in any human, but in his Savior, the LORD God.