

Explore the Bible: Hope Found

November 11, 2022

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Nov. 27 focuses on Micah 7:1-10, 18-20.*

This prophetic book ends true to the rest of its form—moving back and forth between judgment and hope for restoration. That fluctuated pattern is not random. Rather, it displays that both are sure. God promises to both judge the people for their sins and to restore them to God, each other, and their centers of worship and living.

God is Judge and Redeemer. These are two, unseparated parts of God's character.

God takes the sins of his people seriously. When we read Micah 7, we understand why.

God is Judge

Micah is speaking to a society riddled with systemic injustice. He cannot find a single righteous person (Micah 7:2). The leadership allowed the desire for bribes to dictate their decrees (7:3). The leadership is like a thorn or brier to those whom they rule over—inflicted with small, constant, and numerous cuts. Finally, they are told not to trust each other, because there was vengeful enmity between friends, neighbors and family members alike (7:5-6). Micah describes a suspicious and corrupt society.

God promises to judge these people living in this way. Why? God will judge our sins for his glory and our good. It is not good that societies will perpetuate this sort of corruption. It is not good to let greed be the ethos of a civilization's leadership, and glory is due to the Lord for being righteous

and holy.

Yet, God's righteousness and holiness do not mean he is distant and uninvolved. In all holiness, God speaks to us, comes to us, and works to make us new. In all righteousness, God desires the same for humanity and such a desire leads him directly to us.

God promises to judge sins, not because he is cruel and distant, exacting and unfair. Rather, God judges the sins of humanity because God is holy and seeks the same for us. God is righteous and wants the same for his people. God judges sins for his glory and our good.

God is Redeemer

God is Judge and Redeemer. God coming to make us holy and righteous is itself an act of redemption. Part of our redemption is the Lord making plain to us we are in need of redemption. Israel was a nation far from God and the ways of God. By naming the sins of the people and showing them the seriousness of their sins, God was working to redeem his people.

God will redeem us by coming to judge us for our sins, but God also redeems us by ensuring the hope of a good and gracious future. God gives hope to those he is working to redeem. The hope for Israel and the hope for us is the promise of God's good future.

We are encouraged to wait for the Lord (7:7). One of the most faithful things we can do is wait on the Lord's promises. The Lord promises to hear his people (7:7), defeat the powerful enemies who have harmed and help his people captive (7:16), and to bring light into darkness (7:8-9). A time is coming for Israel when their sins will be judged, but God ultimately will bring about a time when he will bring light into the darkness, bring hope for the hopeless. Finally, God made promises to their ancestors from long ago. The Lord will keep those promises (7:20).

The past and the future interpret the present. God made promises of hope to his ancestors long ago and those promises remained for Israel. God told the people to wait. Wait on the promises of the past, but also wait on the promises of a good future.

We need to be reminded

The final night Jesus reclined with his 12 disciples, he took bread and cup and told them to remember. Jesus told his disciples to remember the body broken for them and the blood shed for them. Jesus told them whenever they gather, they should remember his sacrifice.

Human beings are forgetful. We altogether do not remember or we, more often, change the past to fit our present wishes. Jesus tells his disciples to remember the moment in history when Jesus Christ of Nazareth sacrificed for the world.

Further, throughout Christ's teachings, he spoke to his disciples about his promise to come again. He said he did not know when it would happen, the day or time, but he assured his followers he would return. In the meantime, the disciples were to be just that, followers of Christ on earth. In the meantime, they were told to remember his sacrifice and live as people of the resurrection.

The Cross judged humanity for our many sins and was the means for our redemption. We wait expectantly and faithfully for Christ to come again so we may know redemption completed.

The past and the present interpret the future. The Cross and Resurrection are our redemption, but we wait for Christ to come again. Our hope is in the One who came to us at a particular moment in history, died in the body, and resurrected so that we might live and wait for his return with all hope. Our hope is in Christ Jesus of Nazareth.

The God who died, resurrected and promises to come again is at work in this world *presently* pardoning sins, forgiving transgressions and delighting in mercy (Micah 7:18). Look to God's actions in the past, wait faithfully for him to come again, and know he *always* is at work for our redemption.

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