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C1039 – November 3, 2010 – Micah 3:9-12
Sins Of The Leadership

Please open your Bible to Micah chapter 3. We are in Micah's second cursing-blessing cycle. By way of review there are three cursing-blessing cycles in the book of Micah. Chapters 1-2 form the first cycle. Chapters 3-5 form the second cycle. Chapters 6-7 form the third cycle. Each cycle begins with the command to “hear” and then proceeds to give a lengthy section on cursing followed by a short section on blessing. The reason the prophets go to such lengths in cursing is because to get to the blessing the nation has to confess their sin. And confession requires that they be convicted of their sin. So the lengthy sections are a series of indictments designed to convict followed by warnings of the consequences if they don't confess and be restored to fellowship with their God. Finally one generation of Israel will confess and be restored.

Chapter 3 we'll finish tonight with a summary of the cursing and next week we'll move into chapter 4, the blessings of Messiah. Chapter 3 is an indictment of the leadership of Israel. In chapter 3:1-4 Micah has covered the sins of injustice among the judicial leadership. The judges of the nation Israel were referred to as the “heads” which meant that the decisions they made in the courts would direct the nation along a specific course. Since they refused to base their judgments on the word of God they exchanged the word of God for the word of man and they distorted justice; oppressing the orphan and the widow and subjugating the righteous poor. This led to a division of the upper and lower class. The rich became richer and the poor became poorer. You had a great division between the upper and lower class. The presence of the middle class is always the sign of a healthy society, a prosperous society. As you begin to see the disappearance of the middle class you're seeing the signs of an unhealthy society, a decaying society. And verse 3 describes a decaying Israeli society. The judicial system of Israel was feasting on the flesh of God's

people. They were chopping them up as for the pot and as meat in a kettle. As the corrupted decisions in the court drove a wedge of separation deeper and deeper between the upper and lower class when the enemy entered and they called upon the Lord to be saved He would hide His face from their distress and they would go to utter destruction.

In Micah 3:5-8 Micah turns to the sins of deception carried out by the prophetic leadership. Many had been called by God to be prophets, to be revelatory agents of the God of Israel and to lead them to the word of God. But they used their gift to prophesy falsely. If people paid them money they gave them a good message, shalom, peace will be in your days, prosperity, fertility, blessing. But if people didn't pay the money then they gave them a bad message; war is coming your way, destruction, infertility, cursing. It was all about the money. So the prophetic leadership mismanaged their gift. Therefore, verse 6, God would no longer give the prophets revelation, and so they resorted to divination and sorcery and deceived the people. They were frauds, perpetrators, full of deceit, haters of God, and haters of God's people. And as such when the day of their destruction came they would be ashamed, utterly embarrassed that they had predicted blessing but they were experiencing cursing.

So we've covered the judicial leadership and the prophetic leadership.

Tonight we come to Micah 3:9-12 and we want to focus our attention on the office of king and the king's leadership. I've tried to break these up in the last three weeks and emphasize one each week so we could get a handle on the principle that *when the leadership of a nation is corrupt the whole nation is corrupted*. This principle is a principle that we see at work in all nations. This is not to say, of course, that human government is an evil institution. God instituted human government after the Flood. It was given to curb the evil appetites of man because God said He would never curse the earth again by way of a Flood. So it's not an evil institution. But the point God teaches the human race is that human government cannot Save. It's not the solution to all of man's problems. Man has tended to make the State or Government ultimate, to declare Government a Savior and in yet every time the government has been given this status as Savior it has oppressed and killed and destroyed people. Ultimately government is necessary but ultimately government cannot save, only God can save through Jesus Christ and so the way into God's government is through the cross work of Jesus Christ. Finally

the problems of fallen human government will be resolved and the way God solves it is not by eliminating government but by eliminating men's sin natures by calling out a people for Himself through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and eventually giving them a resurrection body so we are fitted to serve in His future government. In the meantime we live under authorized, fallen Gentile administrations, that's the book of Daniel.

We say authorized because God placed the sword in the hands of man; the sword being a symbol of the right to punish capital crimes capitally. This right of man was given in the post-Flood world. This was also the period when the rise of nations began and God separated the nations linguistically at the Tower of Babel and so the rise of the human king and the rise of different kingdoms began. Now the first great kingdom of man to dominate was Egypt. They rose to superiority and became the superpower of the ancient world. But inside of Egypt God was growing the next superpower, the nation Israel, which is the kingdom of God. So when Moses and the Israelites march out of Egypt on the night of Passover they had no king, they had no land, they only had a human leader (Moses), but he was not king. So God took them where? To Mt Sinai and at Mt Sinai he gave them the Law and became their King. It is at Mt Sinai that the office of King is established in Israel but the office was not filled by a human king, it was filled by a divine king.

So we have the idea of a King and a kingdom in the nation Israel but it was not the same as the other nations. All the other nations had a human king. Israel did not, she had a divine king. So from Mt Sinai down through the period of the Judges, about 300-350 years the nation Israel had no human kings. The nation was basically divided into the twelve tribes. There were tribal factions, they were not a united people, and you can read about the tribal problems in the book of Judges. When problems would arise that the people could not solve God would raise up a judge and the judge would solve the problem. This was the period of Israel's greatest freedom; they had minimal government intrusion, they had great education, the home school, they had private property, and if any time in history was a democracy this was it. And yet, if you turn to Judg 21:25 you'll see how this period ended. With all the people who think democracy is so great here's a people who had a democracy and the whole society went to pot. Notice the very last verse of Judges 21. Here's the divine analysis of the prophet. "In those days there was

no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Think about that last statement. "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." What's that a description of? Chaos. Society was chaos. It was anarchy. And this is ultimately what a pure democracy will lead to, anarchy. And what's the analysis for why everything was chaos? "There was no king in Israel." No king in Israel? You say, now wait a minute, you just told me 5 min. ago that God was the King in Israel, now you tell me there was no king in Israel. Well, to understand what they mean turn to 1 Samuel 8. Society was chaos. So what do the people want? They want some solution to the chaos. After awhile people get tired of chaos and they want order. They want law. They want rule and leadership. You say, they had God to lead them. Yes, they did, but if you come to verse 4 you start to get the sense that something is wrong. In verse 4 they have a little gathering. Observe who is gathering. "Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;" so we have the elders, the most important men of the nation, they come to Samuel, Samuel is the prophet. Verse 5, "and they said to him, "behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." So Samuel is phasing out, Samuel's boys are duds so what solution do the elders propose? We want a king to judge us like all the other nations. Now the nation Israel was emphatically not to be like all the other nations just like the church is not supposed to be like the world outside of the church. We're supposed to be distinct, that's our testimony to the superiority of God's wisdom over the world's wisdom. But here they come with the wisdom of the world; we want to be like all the other nations. They have all the great ideas, they have the real solutions to life's problems, we want a human king. In essence, what are they saying? If they're wanting a human king but they already have a divine King then logically they're rejecting their King. And notice verse 6. "But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel but they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7The Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them." So the people's desire for a human king, like all the other nations, was a rejection of their divine King. And so Israel is going to see the rise of the human monarchy for the first time in its history. It's strange how this office arises. On one hand it arises out of a sinful situation - the people wanting to be like all the other nations; but on the other hand it was already divinely authorized to be the office through which Jesus Christ would come to rule in human history. So you see the

interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God can take a sinful situation and work it together for the ultimate good. This is an example of the great Rom 8:28, God works all things together for good.

So we have the origins of Israel's monarchy and we want to make some key points about the monarch. They wanted a monarch just like all the other nations. The Kings of the other nations were extremely powerful. For example, I quote, "The ancient Near East considered kingship the very basis of civilization. Only savages could live without a king. Security, peace, justice could not prevail without a king to champion them. If ever a political institution functioned with the assent of the governed, it was the monarchy which built the pyramids with forced labor and drained the Assyrian peasantry by ceaseless wars.... Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration." A very high, lofty and pagan view of kingship; so high and lofty was their idea of the king that the very stability of the universe depended on him. And that's not true. The very stability of the universe depended on God's word in the Noahic Covenant. He controls through His word in the rainbow covenant all the particles of the universe. But Israel rejected that, they want a human king who will go out and fight their battles, who will give them security, peace and justice just like all the other nations. In other words they want a gimmick.

Now, God grants them the request. He's ultimately going to work it for good, but turn to Deut 17 to see that God is going to put limitations on the office of the King in Israel. God is not going to let them have a kingly office just like the kingly office in pagan nations. There are limitations. And Deut 17 is one of the major passages for political philosophy in the Scripture, a crucial passage that applies to politics. This was the provision for a powerful leader in the nation. Watch. Deut 17:14 "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' ¹⁵you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses," so there's a limitation, it's not going to be by a democratic election, God will choose the king. Verse 15 continues, "*one* from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman." That's happened a number of times in history and it's a bad idea to put a non-citizen over your country. Verse 14 is the demand of the

people, they are tired of chaos, they are tired of society falling apart; they want centralized leadership, powerful and strong leadership. But God says you watch it, when you swing toward a centralized power, watch out you just don't pick any person to be that strong leader, you pick the one I choose. Then He says I will further restrict the king, "Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' ¹⁷"He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself." The king has financial limitations put on him by God. Verse 18, "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom," look at this in vv 18-19, this is phenomenal political idea. "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. ¹⁹"It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel." What was the point of the king daily studying Scripture? That his heart not be lifted up above every other low life in his kingdom. What attribute do the Scriptures develop? Humility. And what is humility? At the core of this attribute it's a recognition of the fact that I am a creature, I am not the Creator. Anyone who recognizes the God of Creation, the God of Gen 1 can't really be arrogant. How can you be arrogant when you're respecting the God of creation? That's humility, you're recognizing that you are a creature, even though you may hold the office of the king, you're a creature just like everyone else in your kingdom. So the king was to study the word of God to develop humility, so he doesn't begin to think of himself as the pagan kings thought of themselves, so high and lofty that the very stability of the universe depended upon them. Once you are in a position of leadership without this characteristic of humility you've lost it. You cannot rule well without it and that's what I would consider the central problem among the vast majority of the rulers of our country today. They do not have a genuine humility before God. They are not students of the Scripture and therefore they have not developed humility. In amazing arrogance they have set themselves above the Law. They have actually made laws and passed laws through the Legislature that they are not subject to. Laws such as the healthcare reform are not binding on

members of the Legislature. They have put themselves above the Law. They arrogantly have put themselves above their fellow countrymen, just like God warned against in Deut 17. And it's a fruit of failure to study the word of God, develop humility and understand that you Senator are a creature like everyone else in this country. You are not above the Law, you are under the Law. And I got an e-mail where someone in this country proposed we amend our constitution to stop our rulers from putting themselves above the law. It reads like this, "Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators and/or Representatives; and, Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators and/or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States." That would respect Deut 17. But we have no respect of this principle today and it's a manifestation of the arrogance of the rulers. And the only way to solve arrogance is the word of God. Until you respect God's authority you make yourself out to be the authority.

But the point we want to get across here is that in the nation Israel when the office of king was established, there were limitations put on it. From the very start God says, alright, you want a king, I'll give you a king, but this kingship is going to be separate from all the other kingships. The king's role in Israel is to obey the law just like every other citizen. One of my sons posed very interesting question last week. He said, "daddy, if a policeman sees another policeman speeding and that policeman is not in an emergency situation, what should the policeman do?" And that's the \$35,000 question, isn't it? Obviously he should give the policeman a ticket. But is that what happens? Or are fellow policeman above the law? This is how corruption sets in.

One of the striking things about the OT is that God sets law over the king. Law was superior. The pagan view was the king is the law, they called it the 'divine right of kings.' So on the pagan side we have Rex Lex, that's Latin for 'law is king.' Basically the kings were the power, you didn't have a right to debate the king, he was king, the divine right of kings. God called me as king and I'm the power here, totalitarian government, all the power concentrated in one man. Some Christians have the idea that this is true on the basis of Romans 13. Since God established government we should always obey the government no matter what. The answer to that is no, human government is not superior. The law stands over human government. Law is superior. It's a misunderstanding of Romans 13. Go back to Romans 12 and you'll see. Let

me recommend a famous book that ought to be essential reading for everybody. It was written by Samuel Rutherford, a Scottish Christian about 100 years prior to the American Revolution. It's called *Lex Rex*, in Latin that means "The Law is King." What was the claim of the pagan kings? Rex Lex, exactly the reverse, "The King is Law." This book which I guarantee you'll never read in school, probably never heard of it, is one of the famous books that nobody wants to touch. This is an example of a Christian who wrote a famous book, Rutherford passed it around England as a tract; you can read it on the internet today and you'll notice how long a tract was in their days. He concluded that the Bible limited the divine right of kings. This is what led to the Puritan revolt in England. So this is really one of the sources, historically, that lie behind our Constitution. The constitution and the division of powers inherent in that document are grounded in Rutherford's *Lex Rex*. It wasn't Thomas Paine who came up with these ideas, Paine was a pagan writer and he came along and after all the work was done by the Christians, Paine got the credit. It's not correct. It was the Christians who articulated their political philosophy based on God's word that's in the Constitution. That goes back to Rutherford, And Rutherford's central passage was Deut 17; the law stands over the king. There are limits to government.

Let's go into the biblical text of 1 Sam 8 to see the warnings of having a human king. 1 Sam 8 is a very, very important passage for its political implications. It's also important because it shows how the flesh has to be restrained. This office can so easily be abused. There are many arrogant, not many humble. Beginning in verse 10 we have a very political document, one of the classic documents of all time, the depiction of totalitarian government. Watch. "So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. ¹¹He said," here's what's going to happen, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place *them* for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. ¹²"He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and *some* to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots." So there will be a draft into a permanent standing army. Not only will they be drafted, but notice in verse 12 that the government will own property and the people will be forced to serve the government and they will be in bondage to the government. Then in verse 13 the girls are going to get their share, "He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers." Verse 14

reaches into the pocket of every land owner, “He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give *them* to his servants. That still holds; do you realize that you don’t own any property, I don’t. You pay for it but you don’t own it. There’s a little doctrine in our Constitution, the government can take you out of your house any time they want. Here’s the law: Eminent Domain, they can evacuate you any time they want. If they want to put a new highway through your house, they can force you to leave. They’re supposed to give you a fair price for your house if they do that, and people say that makes sense. God says, verse 15, “He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶“He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use *them* for his work. ¹⁷“He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants.” Here’s the end of it all in verse 18, “Then you will cry out in that day,” that is, you’re going to have another prayer request, “because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.” Sorry, I answered your first prayer; I’ll give you a king, but I’m answering the second one.

This is how the monarchy got started. Do you see it’s limited and there’s a warning right up front, but these people were so sick and tired of the social chaos, everyone did what was right in their own eyes and when people live in chaos for awhile eventually they cry out for order. We want security. And when it comes down to security, pagan people in a country will always give up their rights for order and security. No matter the cost they want order. And you can read the cost, go ahead and read in 1 Samuel you’ll see wars, you’ll see stupid decisions by Saul, people will get hurt. Do you know why? Because the king is just another depraved human. After they got the king they didn’t like the king. It goes on, verses 19-20, here’s the response. Even though they were warned, look at the excuse that is given. ¹⁹Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us, ²⁰that we also may be like all the nations,” was that the destiny of Israel, to be like all the nations? Excuse me, but what was Mt Sinai all about? They were supposed to be different than all the nations.

Now we’ll come to Micah 3:9 and work through the text. Micah 3:9-12 is a summary of the sins of the leadership of Israel. We’ve seen the judges, the prophets and now the king so he summarizes. And don’t forget the principle:

as a nation's leadership goes corrupt the nation is corrupted. It's a top down procedure. Verse 9, **Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob.** Who are the **heads**? They're the judges, we saw them in vv 1-4. They have the powers of ruling through the court system when they misappropriate justice and produce new legislation. And they are told to **hear**, to pay attention. Then he comes to the next group of leadership. **And rulers of the house of Israel,** the rulers would include the political leadership, the King and his Administration. Observe the name of the King goes unmentioned. The reason we suspect is because when this revelation was given to Micah the king of Judah was Hezekiah and Hezekiah was a godly king and so while Hezekiah was a godly king it shows that Hezekiah was unable to correct the judicial branch and all the rest who ruled in his administration. Then he denounces both, **Who abhor justice And twist everything that is straight,** that is, both the judicial branch and the executive branch of the government hated justice and distorted everything that is straight. The thing that is straight is the word of God. It is the canon of Scripture which is the standard of righteousness because it stems from the righteousness of God. It is the only thing that is true and straight and they twisted it, they distorted it, that's what the pagan heart does, it keeps the things that are not offensive and distorts the things that are offensive. They ruled with arrogance. Bruce Waltke says, "Instead of being a theocracy under God's law, Israel has become an oligarchy under tyrants."

Verse 10 describes what the leadership of Israel utilized their gains for. **Who build Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with violent injustice.** Jerusalem had become elegant, architecturally. Solomon's temple was magnificent and it was the leadership who had exploited the poor to build capital who had used it to build this great capital city of Jerusalem. But it wasn't building the kingdom of God, it was building the kingdom of man. They had become just like all the other nations. They built the kingdom of man through exploitation.

There are actually four violations of the 10 Commandments in verse 10. First one **Who build Zion with bloodshed.** Obviously **bloodshed** refers to murder. The 10 Commandments said, "thou shalt not murder." So the judicial branch through injustice brought murder on the innocent and the King through executive order brought murder on the innocent. The second, third and fourth of the 10 Commandments that are violated in this expression, are

summed up by the expression **And Jerusalem with violent injustice.**

Violent injustice in the Hebrew referred to a violation of three of the 10 Commandments “thou shalt not commit adultery.” This held for the leadership as well as anyone else. They were not permitted to violate the 2nd divine institution: marriage to one woman. They slept around married all kinds women much like political leadership do today. There's nothing new under the sun. The second commandment that was broken under the expression **violent injustice** is “thou shalt not steal.” Yet they stole through the judicial system. The hard-earned goods of any individual, when taken are theft of life because the product of one's hands are the outpouring of his life and therefore he maintains the right to enjoy the products of his labor. The kings stole property by eminent domain as we see in Micah 2:1-2. And the third of the 10 Commandments violated here under the term **violent injustice** is “thou shalt not bear false witness.” And the judges accepted false witness in court and therefore themselves became guilty of violating that commandment. And since the Kings were in cahoots with the judges in the courts then when they give false testimony the judges accept it. Through this exploitation they build the kingdom of man right in Jerusalem.

Verse 11 we come to a new group. **Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe**, nothing new here, these are the judges and they **pronounce judgment for a bribe**, and we already know that accepting a bribe blinds the eyes to justice and who and what God is. The next group is new, **Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money.** Both sins relate to money. The acceptance of money for functions which were to be offered free of charge. The **priests** have three basic functions; the priests, first, conducted worship services in the Temple. That is, he supervised the sacrifices, they exchanged the showbread, they dealt with putting oil in the menorah, they kept incense on the altar and so on, all the tasks that related to the worship service at the Temple. The second thing they did is they judged. Since they knew the Torah better than anyone else they were the best people for judging and giving counsel. So when people had a hard question they would come to the priests to find out the divine view point on their question and the priests who knew the Torah better than anyone else would give an analysis based on what they knew of the Torah and that would solve the question. The third thing the priests did was the function described here, they instructed; in particular they were to instruct people on the Torah, the first five books, and they were to instruct the people in what the Torah said

and how to live their lives in accordance with Torah. And it says here they were doing this **for a price**. You say, that's not so bad, we pay our pastor, what's wrong with it, they need to make a living.

But if you know your OT you know that the Levitical **priests** were supported by the Israeli IRS. God had set up that the Levites didn't have any inheritance and so the other twelve tribes that did were responsible to pay annual taxes that supported the Levites. This is what was called the tithe. The tithe was a national tax. It was not voluntary. Everybody had to pay their taxes. But it was a flat rate. Whether you had \$20 million or \$20 it made no difference. It was a flat 10% rate. You could fill out your taxes on a 3x5 card and send it in to the government. No need for sharp accountants, 25,000 different clauses and intricacies that confuse the whole thing so no average Joe can do his taxes and we have to hire and pay more money to other people to do it for us. And once all the tithe came in the Levites would be supported by it. So Israel's taxes went to support Bible teaching. So when they went out to teach the Bible they were to do it free of charge, there was no offering plate passed, no Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket coming down the aisle, it was all free of charge. They had already been paid. But, as you can see from this verse, the **priests instruct for a price**, means they were going around instructing for more money on top of the money they were already receiving. And so this is what is being condemned.

And the **prophets** did they same, Micah says, **And her prophets divine for money**. The prophets with the conduits of God's revelation. They were merely vessels through which God gave his word to his people. They didn't pay for the word of God so they shouldn't require other people to pay for it. And yet the prophets were not only failing to deliver the word of God but they were divining for money. Divining is never used in a good sense in the Old Testament. It was to use pagan techniques of tapping into the energy of the universe to give people a good omen. Same new age stuff people use today. And that for money. The love of money is the root of all evil, 1 Tim 6:10. Yet notice how they justify their instructing for a price their divining for money, **Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us."** They leaned upon a half-truth. On one hand the nation Israel is God's people through the Abraham covenant. And God will bless them on the basis of the Abraham covenant. Those blessings are guaranteed. And that's the truth. But that's only half the truth. Because

the other half of the truth is that the nation Israel is in a treaty with God through the Mosaic covenant. And if they disobey the laws of the Mosaic covenant then God will curse them. So they tell them the first truth, Oh, God is with you, but they don't tell them the second truth, that the nation is heading to destruction. So yes, the nation is ultimately secure, but only the nation that obeys God's commandments will enjoy the blessing.

Verse 1, **Therefore, on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.** On account of the leadership three places are listed here as being destroyed. They had built these with bloodshed and violence they would be destroyed by bloodshed and violence. **Zion** was the ancient city of David South of the modern Temple Mount bordered on its east by the Kidron Valley and on the West by the Tyropoeon Valley. That ancient city called **Zion**, the city of David **will be plowed as a field. Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins. Jerusalem** refers to the area west of the modern Temple Mount, where most of the modern city is and it will become **a heap of ruins** just as Samaria was earlier described as becoming a heap of ruins under the Assyrian siege of Shalmaneser V. And third, **the mountain of the Temple will become high places of a forest.** The **mountains of the Temple** is the Temple Mount or Mt. Moriah. The name of the rock upon which the temple is built is called Moriah. It is the highest elevation. Everything around it descends. And the highest point on the rock is where we think the holy of holies is and where the Ark of the covenant sat. So this place, **the mountain of the Temple**, Mt. Moriah will **become high places of a forest.** The high places were the places where idols were worshiped, where the Baal cult and Asherah cult set up their altars and their temples. The Temple Mount will be desecrated and pagan altars will be set up.

When did this all take place? When Babylon in three sieges under Nebuchadnezzar invades in 605BC, 597BC, and finally in 588-586BC, the final campaign against Jerusalem and the rest of the southern kingdom went into exile. It was three sieges. Daniel, if you're familiar with his book, and with his friends Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, they all went into exile in the first siege 605BC. We think Jeremiah the prophet went into exile in the second siege of 597BC. And probably Ezekiel went at the same time as Jeremiah. So these prophets were what we call Exilic prophets because they

were in exile when the word of the Lord came to them and they spoke to the nation in a desperate time.

So in conclusion, because of the sins of the leadership, because of sins in the judicial branch, the heads of the nation who legislate from the bench, who made laws that overrode God's laws hid the people from the true nature of who God is. And because of the sins of the executive branch, the King of the nation and his administration who put themselves above the Law, (Rex Lex, King is Law), who by executive order ruled with violence and oppression, distort justice and rejected the authority of God. And because of the sins of the priests who received their sustenance through the equal taxation of the 12 tribes, yet this was not enough. They refuse to instruct and teach people the word of God for free. Instead they exacted money. And because of the sins of the prophets who rather than revealing the true word of God divined, consorted with demons and that for a price. To lie to the people and tell them, "Oh God is with us, God loves us, God chose us as his everlasting people God is in the midst of us. Nothing can go wrong." Because of these sins of the leadership God turned his face away and Zion, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount and they were overrun by the militaries of Babylon and went into exile. The failed leadership failed to build a kingdom. It would take proper leadership to build the kingdom of God and so next week we'll see who builds the kingdom of God successfully.

The principal thing to learn, that when the leadership of the nation is corrupt the nation itself will go down. May we learn this principle and realize that the only solution to this problem is that we confess our sin, be restored to fellowship, return to the word of the living God, submit to his word as authoritative in every area of life and humble ourselves before him, crying out with genuine tears of contrition that He would save us.

"Let justice roll down like waters, And righteousness like an everlasting stream."

- Amos 5:24

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