

THE SINS OF JERUSALEM

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The Book of Micah begins with these words: “The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. *For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?* Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem” (Micah 1:1-9). God pronounces woe upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel and her capital city of Samaria, and also upon the city of Jerusalem. In verse 5, the Lord gives the reason for the coming destruction of Jerusalem, mentioning her high places. Where did this evil among God’s people come from?

Ahaz

The idolatry of Samaria had come to Judah and Jerusalem (Micah 1:9). God said that in Zion (Jerusalem) “the transgressions of Israel were found in thee” (Micah 1:12). Most of these sins were introduced by Ahaz king of Judah. Ahaz “*did not that which was fight in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree*” (2 Kings 16:2-4). God says He “*brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord*” (2 Chr 28:19). But “in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz” (2 Chr 28:22). After bringing the idolatrous practices of Israel into Judah,

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(continued)

Ahaz then introduced the idolatry of Syria which became “the ruin of him, and of all Israel” (2 Chr 28:23). He had a replica of an altar in Damascus made in Jerusalem and even had the Lord’s brazen altar removed from the temple and attached to his new altar (2 Kings 16:10-17). Ahaz even had the temple in Jerusalem closed (2 Chr 28:24). Micah was prophesying during this time (Micah 1:1).

Manasseh

The pattern that Ahaz established was reversed by his righteous son Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18-20; 2 Chr 29-32). But then Hezekiah’s son Manasseh picked up where Ahaz had left off. Manasseh “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Chr 33:2-9). Manasseh himself actually repented (2 Chr 33:10-20), but the people of Judah and Jerusalem persisted in wickedness. At this point, the prophet Jeremiah was inspired with these words: “*But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah*” (Jer 2:28). And God determined to wipe Jerusalem like a dish because of the innocent blood of their children which was shed in their idolatrous practices (2 Kgs 21:10-16). As prophesied by Micah, Jeremiah, and many others, this is exactly what God did (2 Kgs 24:1-4).