

Jerusalem – City of Blood • A Teaching from Micah

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MAIN VERSES

[Micah 3](#) • [Genesis 2](#) • [Genesis 4](#) • [Amos 9:6](#) • [Isaiah 1](#) • [Ezekiel 16:49](#) • [Genesis 13](#) • [2 Samuel 5:6](#) • [Exodus 25](#) • [Judges 19](#)

It got so quiet real quick when the kids left. That's just amazing. Shabbat Shalom, everybody. We're so excited that you're here with us today. If this is your first time visiting with us or watching online, you're welcome to our community. We are a community built up of people with a very diverse background. A lot of us come from different places, but we've all come together because we love the Word of God. We love things like the Sabbath. But most of all, we're a community that has dedicated our focus to orbiting the person of Yeshua and imaging God in the way that He intended to make an impact in this world. So welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship.

Jerusalem, the City of Blood

Today, we want to talk about Jerusalem, the City of Blood. It was Wednesday night when I put together the graphics and released a graphic for you. I was really proud of the graphic. Some of you may have seen it. It had fire in it. It was great. And I woke up the next morning and saw what I had posted, and an inner voice came to me and said, "Man, it looks like you're trying to make a movie poster for an action movie starring Gerard Butler." I said, yeah, that wasn't it. So I minimized it to this. If you saw the original graphic, that was a limited time. I was proud of that one.

We're going to talk about Micah today, and we're going to talk about what the prophet Micah says about the city of God, the city of gold, this place that God's temple was built and took up residence in. And by definition, the city itself had a status of holiness because of that. But according to Micah, the entire city has been built up with blood, built with blood. We're going to read from the Word today and hit Micah chapter 3.

Three Accusations Against the Leaders

If you brought your Bible with you today, which I hope you did, please turn with me to the prophet Micah, and we're going to read through chapter 3. And I didn't have it on the screen, so you can listen if you don't have anything to reference. But Micah very eloquently makes three different accusations towards the priests, the prophets, and the politicians of Jerusalem as a whole. And his accusations are very blunt. Allegedly, they're the city of God. Allegedly, they're the people of God. And they have the t-shirts and the stickers and the WWJD bracelets on. But when it actually comes to representing God's character to the world and interacting with the people in this world, they are the worst of the worst. Not only are they the worst of the worst, but they're the worst of the worst of the worst because they're doing it all under the guise that they have God's favor to act however they want. They speak the religious lingo. They wear the religious clothing. They do all the religious things themselves. And they are the worst of the worst. They are the perpetrators of injustice in the world, all while claiming that they are the followers of Yahweh.

Micah chapter 3, starting in verse 1. Then he said, "Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel. This is what the Lord says. But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgressions, to Israel his sin. Hear this, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right, who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with wickedness."

Whoo, that's a lot. That's a lot. Jerusalem, the city of God, the city of peace, the city that was meant to represent and be the Garden of Eden reincarnate. That's what it is. That's what it was meant to be. God says he's going to plow it, plow it, in the place where his temple will become a heap of rubble because the people, the inhabitants of the Garden reincarnate, are all corrupt in their ways. They only do things that profit themselves. And they ignore the opportunities to help others or to support others or to stand in the gap for others if it doesn't benefit them. Because why would you waste your time giving your attention to someone else if it doesn't benefit you in any way?

The American Dream and Self-Serving Hearts

We can understand that as Americans, right? We can relate a little bit because that's literally how we're taught to survive in our economy. Oh, it's just a dog-eat-dog world. Yeah, that's how we get to the American dream, right? That's how we're trained. And this is the same. This is what Jerusalem had become before. The place where God's revelation and presence was

supposed to launch forth from and overtake the world had become so corrupt that God is abandoning it.

But the thing that is so disgusting to God—and I want to reemphasize this—Isaiah chapter 1, where the whole book starts out with this, shows that it's still boasting itself as being a nation under God. It's prideful about that. We're on God's side. We serve Yahweh. We have prophets. Our politicians serve God. We love the Lord. Look at our temple. The people, the people, we are all celebrating God's grace on us. They had taken on the identity of a follower of God but perverted it to be self-serving.

You hear me use the term "spray painting Jesus on things." It's how we do it. Whenever we want something to be ordained by God or have a passion about something, we just spray paint Jesus on it, right? And then it's like, "Oh, this is now my zeal because it's God ordained." Does anyone know what I'm talking about? I don't need to pull out explanations or examples, because we all have a little can of spray paint Jesus in our back pocket that we use from time to time and don't even realize it.

When Convenience Trumps Justice

This is something I want to be zealous about. Now it's God ordained, and it's not. When they saw someone who was being oppressed, marginalized, or in need, or had no representation among the community, they ignored them because they kept listening to the politicians and leaders who told them, "You're good believers in God already." And God says, "Because of your idolatry to Jerusalem, you taking my name and rebranding it to your own selfish desires, doing things that only benefit you, and you choosing only to implement real justice at times when it's convenient or beneficial to you, I'm going to wipe you from the face of the earth. Because people like you do not belong in an Eden like mine."

That's the message. It's a humbling message, isn't it? Matt, you're usually all really lovey-dovey with Jesus. This is the story of our God and the story of his creation and his passion for the mission that he's given to mankind. And the prophets are violent in their depiction of God's disappointment when the mission is taken up by the people that have committed to it and made into an idol that they control.

The Unanswered Prayers of the Enemy

"I'm a follower of God," is what they say. "No disaster will come upon us." And because they refuse to humble themselves, when a time of need comes and they cry out to God—"Oh, the fire

is here. The fire is at our feet. I don't know what's going on, God. I didn't plan for this. We're in turmoil. We're in calamity. There's a crisis."—they cry out to God. And I say, "Why is God not answering us? What's going on here? We're his followers. We're his believers. We follow the commandments. We have the checklist. We've done it. We're his image bearers." So they pray more and they cry out more and they have their prayer meetings and they fast. And God does not answer because they are the enemy of his kingdom.

Are you the enemy of God's kingdom despite your passionate prayer life, despite your dedication to keeping a select few commandments that you deem are the most important, that are convenient for you to keep? Despite your eyes closed when you raise hands during worship, that intimacy—maybe we'll just end right there with that question. Because that's a convicting question to ask. It's always convicting to audit yourself, right?

Looking Through Garden Lenses

And at least according to the prophets, they can be determined by whether you look religious, talk religious, act religious, but don't really do anything that's Eden-like, Garden of Eden-like. Because that's the whole mission of the gospel: God's kingdom come. Everything that has been distorted since mankind chose violence over obedience to God, falling into his will and being the co-creators of creation, ruling and reigning the way that God intended—ever since that moment we ate that fruit—God's finally done something about it. He's taken the steering wheel and he's bringing it back, and that's the good news: we're going back to the garden some way, shape, or form. And that's what we're called to do, and that's our mission: to walk around with little Garden of Eden lenses on, no matter how foolish that looks, because the world thinks it's dumb.

But when you look out at the world, that's what you see. Paul says, "If you're in Christ..." He doesn't say you are a new creation. He does not say that. He just says, "New creation. If you are in Christ, new creation. It's here." You've entered into the reality—the quantum world of new creation, whatever. Paul says that if you've experienced the grace of Christ, then you have a different set of lenses when you look out at the world and you see other people who are trapped in their sin. You don't see all of these horrible people that are my enemies. You see people that need help. You see people that need grace. That's why we don't kill our enemies as Christians, right? We give forgiveness and grace and mercy on another level in the way that Yeshua demonstrated to us.

And allegedly, that is how we mimic the garden that is here and still yet to come. But when we say we mimic the garden and then distort it, that's when God has a problem. That's when he has a problem.

The Bible as One Continuous Story

Everybody is suffering in the world. The whole world is burning down. And we're acting just like everybody else, but with a little bit of spray paint Jesus on us. Now, I know I don't normally do this, but I want to get nerdy. And that's okay because the Bible is awesome. The Bible is a story. And it's meant to be read as a story. And we have come all too accustomed to breaking up into itty-bitty chunks and memorizing single Bible verses that we can wield at a moment's notice. We can use these little Bible verses that have no context when we use them like that. It doesn't mean stop doing that. It's good to memorize the Bible. But it's also really good to read it as a story from beginning to end because that is how it was put together. These books were not randomly put together. Even the books themselves within them were not randomly just blotted out. No, there is a story that is being told. There are subtle hints and word plays and patterns within the stories that are supposed to get your attention as the reader. And so I want to dive into a little bit of that because that's how it's meant to be read. The Bible is meant to be read as a type of epic, an adventure that you're invited to join into that talks about a mission of a great God. And it's a mission that includes you.

The Wordplay in Creation and the Helper

And so one of the coolest word plays in the Bible, my opinion, it's one of many, happens in Genesis chapter 2 and 4. And [Genesis 2](#) is the creation story. It's kind of like Creation Story 2.0, if you will, because it's a little bit different than [Genesis 1](#), but it's still elaborating and pushing forward the story. And it describes God bringing forth plants in this oasis of this world, in this little itty-bitty garden out of this wild wasteland world. And then he brings forth mankind and he places them in the garden because this is the place where he walks and he dwells and he wants to dwell with mankind. God likes to be part of a community. And he sees a man that he created out of mud lacking the ability to complete the mission that he's intended for him. We have this man, a little mud pile, blew the Ruach in, right? But he's missing something. He is incapable of doing this as he is. And so God says, okay, I need to make him a helper or helpmate. The helper, the ezer. A helper equal to him, the helpmate. [Genesis 2](#), verse 18. And the Lord said, And the rib he took out of man, which the Lord God had taken, he made a woman out of. And brought her unto the man. And then Adam said, wow, this is now bone of

my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken from man. Actually, the first thing he said when he saw her was, whoa, man, isn't she pretty? Sorry, I know that was a joke that was told in a little old Baptist church somewhere in 1992. And I have revived it. But this is the story. This is the story. And later it says that Adam called her Eve. Eve. Eve or in Greek, Gaia, because she is the one that brings forth, she's the life giver. What a powerful name, life giver. Adam, which means dirt man, the life giver, right? It says he named her the mother of all living. Now what's neat is the word used in verse 22 that's written there that says that God made her. It's an architectural term. It's a word meaning to build. It literally says God built a woman, banah, built, like the minions, bananah, banah. Like Noah built an ark. But it's the same word. God built a woman. This word is only used in association with God doing it two times in the Bible. Here, when God built and constructed the woman. And in [Amos 9, 6](#), where he says, He builds, but not his lofty palace in the heavens and sets the foundations of the earth. He calls for the waters of the sea, pours them out over the face of the land. The Lord is his name. What a powerful word when used in association with God. So we're probably going to do a sermon soon on women called Built Different. But God's taking a man made of mud, mud pile, and now he's going to construct this woman from his rib. It's Mankind 2.0. Yeah, God builds. And he builds the helper, the ezer. Ezer is the word for helper, ezer. And the wordplay occurs here. You put a pen in here, and just like we always do, the hyperlinks that we find in the Bible, we're going to jump over to the story of Cain.

The Corruption That Follows the Knowledge of Good and Evil

We know what happens with the story of Cain and Abel. Mankind has eaten the fruit of determining good and evil for themselves. And when we do this, our judgment is always corrupt and we'll always lean towards self-serving pursuits. And Cain and Abel are meant to draw closer to God with their offerings, but Cain believes he should be superior. He should have something that Abel has. But Abel gets what he desires. And so this is an easy fix. We'll remove Abel from the equation and then everything will be right. But that doesn't work that way, does it? So Cain is told, because you killed your brother, you will be a wanderer. You will be a wanderer. Cain says, what about all the people that are out there? They're going to see me and kill me. So God puts a mark on him and he says, when they see the mark, You will not die. They won't kill you. It kind of has that like cities of refuge vibe to it right there in the beginning. It's kind of neat. First murderer does not receive the death penalty by God.

The Eastward Journey and Cain's City

So Cain goes out east of Eden and he lives in the land of Nod, which means the wandering land. And in [Genesis 4.16](#), we have his journey, and it kind of sums up what happens to Cain. Then Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden, the same direction as what city that we see later in the Bible, the worst city of all? Babylon, right? So the story is always setting up something in the future. It's all one story, right? It's a thread. And then Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became a builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. And we'll keep reading. What happens to the city of Cain? It's kind of neat. He builds a city. I wonder what it looked like. Skyscrapers? I don't know. Verse 18. So the genealogy just stops. It wants to tell us something about Lamech. He had two wives. Good luck. Good luck.

The Song of Lamech: Celebrating Violence

Now, Lamech said this to his wives. This is the first, you could say, recorded song in the Bible. Okay? You ready for a song in the Bible? This is a song that was sung. Before the Bible was printed and handed out to everybody, back when it was orally transmitted, I'd like to think the speaker would sing this song in Hebrew. Something I'm not able to do for you today, but just go ahead and think about that. It'd be neat, right? So Lamech sang this song to his wives and he said, Adah, hear my voice. Wives of Lamech, pay attention to my words, for I killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is to be avenged seven times over, then Lamech it will be 77 times. Lamech is celebrating and singing a song about how easy it is for him to slaughter other people. Oh, we got humbled real quick, didn't we? It's no longer funny. Yeah, it's a point. So the Bible is drawing attention to this. Lamech is celebrating that he is able to kill people much more easily than others are able to kill him. He's a slaughterer, and he's proud of it, and he's showing off in front of his wives.

The Question of Cain's Wife

Now, what's the elephant in the room? Cain was intimate with his wife. When did Cain get married? Who did Cain marry? Wait a second. What's happening here? Was it his sister? Yeah, that's it. Yeah, it was his sister. Yeah, we fixed it. That doesn't make it better. We can just be honest, right? But I bring that up to say, sometimes the biblical authors don't care about the questions you have about the story that they're writing. And sometimes they're not going to try to fix the problem that you have with the story. Could have been his sister. Could have been, who knows? But that's not a question that the biblical authors ever thought you would be asking because you're only asking that if you're not paying attention. I don't know. They didn't

care to explain it because it wasn't the point. So don't make a point out of something that's not a point in the biblical story.

The Parallel Patterns: Building and Naming

So look at the theme here. A man is joined together in the garden. A man is joined together with a woman. Building something is involved. And then the man names something. Adam names Eve. And here it says that Cain builds a city. And the Hebrew word for city is *ir*, *ir*. I'm not sure if I put it up here. Did I have the two? Here we go. So here's the alleged wordplay. We have in the garden, God building a helper, *ezer*. And we have Cain building a city, *ir*. Looks very similar, sounds very similar, both involved, kind of the same things. You've got a woman and a man coming together, and then there's a naming that happens. And in this section of Adam and Eve, a man and a woman are brought together, and the *ezer* is built together.

Names and Cities: The Pattern Emerges

And Adam names her Eve because she brings forth life. But with Cain, Cain is brought to his wife. And *Ere* is built, not *Ezeer*, a city. And he names it, not a name that brings forth blessing, but he names it after himself and his lineage, his son. Eve is a mother of life, but the thing that Cain names is a city of violence, a mother of violence. A city where war and violence are celebrated everywhere. I wonder what July 4th looked like there. Gracious, right?

But do you see the pattern? And you're supposed to pick up on it as the reader, just like, is that something? Is it not something? And as the story goes on in the Bible, you'll see that it's the same pattern. So we have a tension right here in the story. When man builds, we don't see something good, at least in the city form. Not good.

Cities Built on Pride

How about the second city that's kind of mentioned in the Bible? Well, there's a tower in it, right? Babel. Wasn't a great story about a great city. It's a subtle way of introducing Babylon, by the way. And Babel was filled with the intention to lift themselves up higher and higher and higher. Filled with pride for self-serving purposes. Not a good city. God scatters everyone in it. Maybe the next city will be good, right?

And we go on and on. And either cities are mentioned and they have to do with enemies or wars or violence. And then we get to Sodom and Gomorrah. The cities of the plain, according to [Genesis 13](#). And what happens with these cities? Lot is living there, and God sends some angels

to let Abraham know what's about to happen. And God is going to bomb these cities. The angels say that the outcry concerning the cities is so loud that it has reached God's ears. And we know the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah's True Sin

It's a very strange story, and it gets misinterpreted, I feel, most of the time. But the angels go to the city, and they meet Lot at the entrance. And Lot meets them, and he's like, hey, come to my house. And they're like, no, we're going to sleep in the public square. And Lot gets really nervous. He's like, no, you're not. You're not going to sleep out here in public. You're not in Kansas anymore, man. You are staying inside my house where it's safe. And Lot was concerned about them because the city was so bent on exploiting other people and making sure that they were the ones on top and that it was not safe for strangers or foreigners.

So all the men came to Lot's house, right? The angels came in and then all the men of the city came over to Lot's house and start banging on the door. And they're like, hey, we want to show these visiting angels where they are on the totem pole in the most brutal and ancient way of shaming somebody, which was sodomy, something that was done in ancient records of shame, even Assyrian records. We have writings of this. Ultimate way to belittle another person and lift yourself up and conquer, if you will. You force them to assume the position of a woman, which was already almost subhuman in that culture.

And Lot's thinking, okay, well, maybe they just want, if I can be candid, this is a story, if they want sex. Lot thinks they want sex, so he offers his two daughters to them. Again, not something that makes the story any better and not a good role model, but that's not what these men are after. They're not after sex. They're after power. They want to maintain the status of top dog, and they're going to make sure that every single foreigner knows it, and this is how they're going to treat any immigrants that come here.

And of course, we know what happens to Sodom and Gomorrah. The fireballs come. It's a very similar story, if you're a Bible nerd, to what happens in [Judges 19](#). Very similar patterns. The same story, it's just reformed with different characters. But of course, we know what happens. The fire comes down on Sodom and Gomorrah and wipes them out.

Because remember, the sin of Sodom was not simply same-sex rape. If it was the destruction of Sodom, if that's what the whole destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah revolved around, then why were the women also punished? Why was Lot's wife turned to salt when she looked back?

[Ezekiel 16](#) verse 49 gives us a little glimpse of an accusation of the sin of Sodom. And this is, again, going to be the same thing that Israel is accused of and Jerusalem is accused of.

It says, look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom. She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness. Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy. And the next verse talks about them going after the flesh of angels as a form of wickedness. The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah was because they were not hospitable. They did not care for justice. All they cared about was themselves and their money and their food and their water and their housing, and their health care, and they celebrated their own abundance and ignored those who were falling through the cracks of their system.

And when the foreigners approached the city, the first thing they wanted to do was make sure they knew that they were beneath them. The first righteous city that's kind of mentioned in the Bible is the one Joseph ruled over in Egypt with righteousness filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Tension of Cities

And throughout the Bible, we have this tension, this pattern that's set up with cities. We have this, are cities good? Are they bad? Are they both? Do they waver? And we continue with this struggle and tension all the way up to King David. King David's a good guy, right? It's a trick question.

We have a huge shift in the storyline of the journey of Israel. The story of mankind falling. The story of God developing a rescue mission that orbits the man of Abraham and his lineage. Israel rising up. Israel going forward out of Egypt, Israel struggling to take on the mandate of God's Torah and the commandments to be a light to all nations, struggling to get into the land, the place that God has promised, the place of rest, their home, their inheritance, the new garden.

David: United in Peace

And when we come to King David, we have a huge shift in the storyline because this is the king that united all 12 tribes together in their land in peace. It was a big deal. That's why David becomes synonymous with the messianic king in the Bible. It's not because King David was righteous. Because King David was a jerk. And I say that beside that statement. I stand beside that statement. That's what the Bible clearly depicts with a capital J. He was a jerk.

But the reason why David becomes synonymous with the future messianic king is because David united all 12 tribes of Israel as a nation in the land, in the promise, and made peace in the

land. And it's the same thing the Messiah is prophesied to do as well. This great king that's going to be the new David or the son of David or King David himself that's going to come and be the good shepherd that gathers everyone together.

And David was the one that founded Jerusalem. David walks over a mountain that would eventually be full of olives and he found a perfect ascending hill that was surrounded by valleys on all sides. Perfect defensive position. Perfect little mound. I can defend this. This is smart. This is good. Perfect.

Claiming the City: Jerusalem's Foundation

So he walked over and he planted his flag on the ground and proclaimed it the city of peace, Jerusalem. Right? No. It was already a city inhabited by Jebusites.

And here's the account of David overtaking the city, which is neat. It's short, but here's one of the accounts, and the other one's in Chronicles. [2 Samuel 5](#), starting in verse 6.

It was such a defensive, like just great defensive position city. This is very difficult to attack. How do you get up there? How do you... No, our blind and lame will even shoo you away, thinking David can't come in here. Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.

And David said on that day, whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him come up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind who are hated by David's soul. Therefore it said, the blind and the lame shall not come into this house.

Something the Bible does. The Bible sometimes won't tell you what you're supposed to be reading. Sometimes the Bible has details in it that when you're reading a story, you're not sure if, okay, is that supposed to bother me or not? Because it seems like a big victory, and it says God's with them, but this is the city that's going to become the house of God, the home of God, and now it's being established through violence, which back in the beginning of the story was everything got them, and God flooded the whole world because of that.

Is this a city of Cain, or is this going to be a city like Joseph ruled over? God's with them, moving forward.

The author of 2 Kings does this very well in the first 12 chapters when King Solomon is lifted up. And he's just boisterous. Oh, yeah, he prayed for wisdom, so God's going to give him all these other things. And then you keep reading about all the amazing things that King Solomon

does. And you're like, yeah, he became an arms dealer and took tanks from Egypt and sold them up north and profited off violence and war. And it was great. You're like, wait a second.

And, yeah, he built God's temple using slaves. And it's like, wait a second. Is it good or is it? And so just note that. It's okay to kind of pause and meditate on the text.

So there's already a city here, a well-established city of Jebusites. They have an advanced water system with advanced defensive. And it's so cool when we go to Israel to see the work of the late professor Eilat Mazar, whose main focus was discoveries of the city of David that she excavated.

The Ark on a Cart

And you can walk through the water system. You can walk and look at and look down into the water system that they believe exists. Secular archaeologists say, if the story's true, this would be the water system they would have snuck up through. So as believers, I'm totally stoked, because I'm like, this is it. You can actually see these things. You can walk through them underneath the city of David, which is super cool. Things I get really excited about. But David slaughters everyone in the city of Jebus, and then he names the city after himself. We already have a pattern. Is this a thing or is it not a thing? I don't know. It's a big deal, though. So what's David going to do after he takes the city? It says that he builds the city, and he names the city after himself. Next chapter, there's a big celebration that goes forth, right? Because why wouldn't there be? David has this celebration, and he establishes Jerusalem, which is the city of peace. So the next chapter, people are dancing, and it's not just a little dancing. It's big dancing, with celebration, and David wants to bring the Ark of the Covenant into his city that he built and named after himself, but God was with him. So he puts the Ark of the Covenant on a cart and starts rolling it in. Everyone's familiar with the story, right? We've all heard it. And as the reader, you're supposed to notice that David is putting the throne of God on a cart, okay? The Ark of the Covenant is the big gold box that has the Ten Commandments in it, Aaron's rod, the manna. It was the place in the tabernacle where God's presence revealed itself. Imagine it being a stargate to the heavenly throne room of God. It was a big deal. No one was allowed to go in and encounter it except one day of the year, and that was to make atonement, the high priest. So it was a big deal. It was meant to be the throne of God with the two angels on either side reminding us of what? What if the story has two angels at the entrance of the garden? The entrance of the garden — this is the place of divine residence. And David loads it on a cart. So as the reader who's already read the story, is this a thing? Because David put the ark of God on a cart with oxen to pull it. Seems like a good idea. Rent a U-Haul truck, right, and put it in there.

But what's wrong with the picture? We should be raising our eyebrows, because we remember in [Exodus 25](#), the Ark of the Covenant is only supposed to be transported one way, and that is carried with poles. You don't put it in the back of a pickup truck. You carry it with poles. And not just anyone can carry it — the priests carry it. So right off the bat, we have one of these moments where, what is this? Is this a thing? Well, I guess we'll keep reading and see what happens, right?

Uzzah

So it's walking, the oxen are pulling the cart, and it stumbles — the ox stumbles — and the cart starts to shift, and the throne of God isn't strapped down, so it begins to fall off the cart. And Uzzah, one of the priests, thinks, man, I've got to do something or else the throne of God is going to fall on the ground, and that would be really bad. So he reaches out and just kind of pushes it back up, right? He did a good thing, right? And it says that God's anger was unleashed upon him. He was struck. He was killed. God struck him out of his anger. God was angry. And we always think, why was God so angry at this guy who was just trying to protect his ark? It wasn't because the priest was trying to do a good thing and keep the ark from falling. No — God was upset in the story because the entire priesthood, and David, had adjusted the protocol for their convenience and benefit. We're starting to see the theme. It's getting murky. Well, it's not that big of a deal. Yeah, it's kind of a big deal. So God gets angry at Uzzah, and then David gets mad at God, and then here we are, right? David gets mad at God. He's like, well, we're trying to get your ark in here. David just slaughtered a people, named a city after himself, and now he's making God's throne a trophy item as he carries it in, and David's upset because God is not having it, right? But it's Jerusalem, so it's a good thing — or is it?

The story gets stranger, because David takes the ark to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months. And as the ark is parked there, this family is just overwhelmed with blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing. So after three months, David cools down, and then he goes back and gets the ark. They pick up the ark. Now they're carrying it the right way. And to be on the safe side, they march it into Jerusalem, but every six steps, they stop. And on the seventh step, they slaughter a bull and a fatted calf. Every six steps — one, two, three, four, five, six — and then the insinuation is the seventh. The seventh step is set aside for a sacrifice. Overkill? Maybe. I don't know — is that a pun? I don't know. But it's a very strange story when you're reading it, because it's like you have this trail of blood going into Jerusalem now. Not only that, David's dancing. And what's David wearing? He's wearing this linen ephod, which was likely a priestly garment. But he's not a priest — he's a king. He's a king. So you get these images now

of the presence of God walking into this city where there is a king-priest ushering it in. Again, vague garden echoes of an Adam figure establishing the place where everyone is going to dwell with God. Is everybody good? Are we okay? Okay.

Is Jerusalem a Good City or a Bad City?

So is Jerusalem a good city or a bad city? I mean, we already jumped ahead and saw Micah. But in this story, it's looking pretty good. Maybe it's a tension. Maybe it's a tension. And that's the beauty of the Bible — they don't just give you the answer. You have to keep reading, because it depends. Because it's not about the city, is it? It's about the hearts of the people in the city. And spoiler: the hearts of the people loved the idea of being garden people in a garden city that was the light on the hill, extending God's blessing and revelation to all people — only for a short period of time. The people loved that idea. They loved that identity of the garden people. But that's not what they actually practiced. Micah and Amos are two prophets that give chilling exposure to just how wicked the people of God were. All while they showed up on Sabbath. They sang praise and worship songs. They prayed with tears in their eyes, offered incense at the temple, brought their tithes and offerings. Didn't eat the pig, didn't mow their lawn on Saturday. And God said, I'm going to make this great city, the city of gold, the city where my house sits — I'm going to pave it into a parking lot, because maybe then it will actually serve some type of positive purpose in the world.

I guess the point of the message, guys, the point of Micah, is that we have to watch ourselves. We've got to watch ourselves. We have to watch what movie we're playing for ourselves. We have to take time to audit ourselves. We know the love of God, right? We claim to. We know the name above all names. We know the peace that God brings. We know the level of mercy and grace God gives. We know his forgiveness that only comes in the name of Yeshua, or Jesus. We know that — but so did they, to an extent. And we can also trick ourselves into thinking that we are not contributing to oppressing the poor around us, that we are not standing up against justice in the world, that we're not failing to be the light of God's love, mercy, and grace. You can sing worship songs, we can pray in tongues and not cuss, we can know a lot of Bible verses, and still show up to someone's door demanding that they send out their guests because you need to make sure they know who's on top. We can sing "I love Yahweh" in the same breath as we sing praises to him, and then also sing songs about how we can inflict violence on others. We can go to church, we can carry our Bible, and we can still be a child of our father, the devil. And I think that is the warning of these stories collectively. That's the warning from Israel.

The New Jerusalem

That even Jerusalem — Jerusalem, has anyone ever been to Jerusalem? I mean, isn't it just an amazing thing to walk into Jerusalem? They always take you over the Mount of Olives so you can see everything, the Temple Mount. And then the first time you walk into the Old City, it's so surreal and amazing, because you feel the spirit of peace wanting to drown the world. You can feel it, because that is the spirit and the intent of the city. But even Jerusalem was not a place that God thought was acceptable to dwell in throughout the biblical narrative.

See, the Bible ends with a city. It starts with a garden, which is kind of neat, right? It starts with a garden. It ends with a city. But not just any city — it ends with a garden city. Garden city. Not the old Jerusalem, but a new Jerusalem. And depending on your eschatology and how you view the book of Revelation — which we discussed, a lot of different views, in our Revelation series — John has this apocalyptic vision of this new Jerusalem. And its dimensions defy physics. And its walls are just insane — just how high, and how they're able to stand, I don't know. It's big. It's huge. But the walls of the city are like decoration only, because the gates stay open twenty-four seven, because the whole point of the city is to call all nations in, right?

Come in to the city of God. This is the new Jerusalem. And it's a city where the lamb dwells. And it's a city where the light of God illuminates and shoots out from. And it manifests the tree of life with a river of life, of living water that flows out of it, that brings healing to all nations. Come on, guys. This is awesome. And just like most of it, again, depending on your eschatological view, which is totally acceptable because apocalyptic visions like the one in John and Ezekiel and Isaiah have a lot of discussion around them. I got to set myself up, right? I think it's a metaphor, just like many other things in John's vision, for the people of God. Because it's the place where the lamb dwells, makes its residence in. And the wickedness is stuck on the outside and cannot penetrate inward. But God's light and his love and his mercy and his grace and his healing manifest from it. And I think that's a metaphor for the people of God that have the lamb. And it's the people of God that are impacting the world, where sin and wickedness are something that is out there.

The City on a Hill

Because that's what Jesus says we're called to be, right? We're called to be the city on a hill. You're to be the city on that hill. But how do we get there? How do we get there? Well, instead of trying to build our own ear, maybe we should allow God to build his izer, his helpmate, his bride. And I think that's the work that he's doing in all of us even now.

So guys, I don't know where you're at today. And my hope is that you've seen something in the Bible that you're going to go back and study and read. But I want to let you know that there are blessings in the Bible, and there are calls of hope, and there are calls of God's love, and there are calls of God's yearning to wrap his arms around you, and there's also a call of warning, warning. And the calls of warning from the prophets are not to the pagan nations out there. They're not to all the stuff they're doing. The call of the prophets are to you. The warning is to you. The warning is to me. Because God doesn't like sin and wickedness and all the other bad things in the world that are out there.

A Warning for God's People

But Isaiah says that when that stuff is ignored from the people, his people, when his own people ignore those who are falling through the cracks, when his own people ignore justice, when his own people can hear the cries of others crying out, saying they are being oppressed, but make excuses on why they're not going to even give it any attention and investigate, Isaiah chapter 1 says it turns God's stomach and makes him want to vomit. And that's the audit that I charge you guys to consider, especially as Americans, where our country tries to conflate our faith with their politics. And the two should not touch in such an intimate manner as they try to make us think they do. Because we only pledge to serve one king.

Your Mission Has Not Changed

And as we go into a more politically heated season, as we do every four years, and we're trained to sharpen our knives, and we're trained to accept being told who our enemies are and who aren't, I want you guys to consider that your mission given to you by God and the Holy Spirit that breathes life and abundance and grace and mercy, that mission has not changed. It has not changed. No matter what's on TV, no matter who's saying what out there, no matter what's going on out there, you are in new creation. And you look through the lenses of what took place on Calvary to every situation and every person and every circumstance that is outside these doors. That's the warning that I believe Micah is calling Jerusalem to consider. And unfortunately, they did not. And exactly what Micah said would happen, happened. The same warning is still relevant today.

A Time of Prayer and Worship

So guys, please stand as we have a time of meditation, of prayer, of worship, and think about the words of the prophets. And think about where you may be at or where you may need to be.

But also think about the grace and the love and the mercy of what God has given. Because God enjoys creating and constructing his bride. And praise him that he would even allow us to fill such a position and a role. Amen.

Guys, if you need prayer today for any reason or any circumstance, we have prayer team off to the side here. I encourage you, take advantage of that. We'll pray with you and lift you up before the Father. You can sing during this time. You can pray during this time. You can meditate during this time. This is just a quiet time that we come together and reflect.

Alvino Macheno, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for your wisdom. We thank you for the hope that is only found in the love and grace and mercy of your Son, Yeshua, our King, the true David, the one who unites all in peace. Father, we also thank you for the conviction of that Ruach within us, that it would do its job to guide us, to allow us to see things that we don't want to see, to acknowledge things that we don't want to acknowledge, and to be the image bearers that you have called us to be as a new humanity of new creation, that would be a mission that would overtake the world. In the name of your son, Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

The Shema and Blessing

Can you sing the Shema with me? Shema Yisra'el Shem Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. Now may the Lord also cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another and for all people. In order to strengthen your hearts as blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all his kedoshim. And may the Lord bless you and may he keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you peace. In Yeshua's name, Shabbat Shalom, family.

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