

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”  
September 16, 2016**

**Micah 4:1–6:16.** The Millennium, the Messiah, and the indictment of Israel’s sins.

**Acts 14:8–15:21.** Zeus, Hermes, and modern deistic frameworks.

**Job 23:1–17.** Furnace of trials: incinerate faith and love or purify faith and love for God.

**COMMENTS.**

**Micah 4:1–6:16.** This section begins with a wonderful description of the Millennium, which was foretold by the prophets throughout the Old Testament. Micah describes characteristics of the coming kingdom (4:1–8), events that will precede it (4:9–5:1), and the King Messiah who will establish it (5:2–15). Let us note some details: the Millennial Temple will be prominent throughout the world (4:1), people around the whole world will be attracted to Jerusalem (4:1), the entire world will come to Jerusalem to be taught of the Lord and His ways (4:2), the Lord will be the Judge at Jerusalem (4:3), peace will be universal (4:3), Israel will dwell in security and peace (4:4), Israel will be sensitive to God (4:5), Israel will be regathered (4:6), Israel will be made strong (4:7), and Jerusalem will have dominion (4:8). Following these wonderful descriptions of the Millennium and how the Lord is going to bless Israel, Micah describes four events that would occur before the Millennium is established: Israel would experience pain as she is exiled to Babylon (4:9-10), she would be rescued (4:10), many nations would gather against Israel (4:11-13), and the ruler of Israel would be humiliated (5:1). This is followed by a description of the birth of a *new Ruler* (5:2) and His work on behalf of the nation (5:3-15). Jesus is the New Ruler who would be born in a small insignificant town of “Bethlehem,” but His ultimate origins would be from eternity past (5:2)—He is none other than God Himself incarnate. Note the accomplishment of Jesus as Messiah during the Millennium in 5:3-15. Besides destroying enemies from outside Israel, the Messiah will purge the nation of every trace of occultic and idolatrous practices, which were “enemies” within (5:12-14). Nations who refuse to obey the lord will suffer God’s anger and wrath as He will rule with an iron scepter (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 12:5; 19:15), that is, with firmness, strength, and justice. Following this, Micah goes back to indictment of Israel’s sin coupled with the promise of divine chastisement (**Micah 6:1-16**).

**By knowledge and by love.** In **Micah 6** we see Israel’s attempt to hide its empty life with a veneer of religious activity—a routine worship that was not characterized *by knowledge and by true love*. Micah’s contemporary, the Prophet Isaiah, also told God’s people that the whole nation was sick from head to foot (Isa. 1:5–6) but wouldn’t admit it, and that their “worship” was nothing more than “trampling” the temple courts (Isa. 1:12). In this courtroom scene, *the Lord called the witnesses* (**Micah 6:1–2**) and told the people to be prepared to plead their case. The Lord opened the proceedings by telling His side of the controversy, emphasizing the gracious way He had dealt with the nation from the very beginning. He redeemed them from Egyptian slavery; He gave them leaders who guided them through the wilderness with His help; and He brought them to their promised inheritance. And throughout this journey, the Lord had put up with their unbelief, disobedience, and repeated complaints. With true love for the Lord, all that we do is a sham as evidenced by complaining. I don’t care how many hours of doctrine we listen to or study or how many times we confess our sins in order to reconnect to some

fabled conduit, apart from living our lives out of love for the Lord and His grace, it is all void of meaning, see 1 Cor. 13:3. Moreover, the idea that we can just pack in more doctrine and that will make us love God (intellectual determinism) is no more true than simply learning more about a spouse or a friend will *in itself* make us love them more, even if it is true that more knowledge will enable a love that already exists to grow deeper and more fervent. The infallible Bible gives testimony to the fact that a lot of believers who did not have one thousandths of the doctrine that we possess were yet able to cultivate a love for the Lord that was far greater than many of us—how many parents would willingly and with great alacrity offer their son to God as sacrifice like Abraham did in Genesis 22? While one cannot love what one does not know, love is not measured by knowledge. Consider Abraham, who moved into the highest level of love for God, the friend of God status, and he did not even have a Bible. There are at least three vital aspects to growing in God *by true knowledge and true love*: *First*, proper knowledge of God—as we have studied, there is proper knowledge and improper knowledge. Improper knowledge of the Lord is knowledge that you gain by trusting someone else, like a pastor or some intermediary between you and God (or the Word of God). It is not direct knowledge of the Lord. Improper knowledge is always mediated. Proper knowledge, on the other hand, is direct and personal knowledge of the believer of the Lord. It is attained by personal reflection on the Word of God and in a second-personal relationship of daily living life with God—it is living in, with, and before the Lord in all that we do. It is living in His presence. *Second*, true love for the Lord always grows in the context of appreciation of His grace and faithfulness. To grow in *personal* appreciation of God requires serious reflection of His grace and faithfulness to us throughout our *personal* history. The older we are the more we have to reflect on and cultivate our appreciation of God for His faithfulness and grace in sustaining us through all of the perils of life. *Third*, personal contemplation. We as believers need to regularly take “quiet” time to contemplate the nature of God, creation, man, the spiritual life, testing, our characters, the plan of God, and truth as such. We live in perhaps the busiest and least contemplative (and thus most superficial) time in Christian history. We need to take time to think seriously and deeply about ultimate reality and our place in it. In sum, all of those in the Bible who had incredible flourishing love for God that led to amazing transformation/sanctification of their entire lives (from Abraham to Mary Magdalene) had these three essentials to a living relationship with God: personal/proper knowledge, personal/proper appreciation, and personal/proper contemplation. It is all personal and direct—there is no such thing as a living and thriving relationship with God *by knowledge and by love* that exists in any type of proxy, conduit, or intermediary manner.

**Acts 14:8–15:21.** In this section, we have the historical account of Paul and Barnabas witnessing exclusively to Gentiles. The account of their ministry there begins with Paul’s healing a lame man at the gates of the temple of Zeus just outside the city. At Paul’s word, the man leapt up and walked, much like the lame man healed by Peter. This, however, led to much confusion on the part of the pagan crowd. They concluded that the gods were visiting them, calling Barnabas Zeus and Paul, the chief speaker, Hermes (the “mouthpiece” of the gods). Since they spoke in their provincial dialect, Paul and Barnabas at first did not realize what was happening. The Lystrans had a local tradition that Zeus and Hermes had once come to their region in human form and been entertained unawares by an elderly couple. The Lystrans were convinced that it was happening again. The priest of Zeus didn’t want to miss the opportunity to pay personal homage to his god and prepared sacrifices for the pair (**14:11–13**). Only then did Paul and Barnabas realize what was happening. They tried to stop the sacrifices, insisting that they were only human. Paul tried to straighten them out by sharing a word about God. He spoke of God’s mercy and providence. These were pagans who believed in many gods. Paul had to convince them that there was only one true God before he could begin to share the gospel of God’s Son. The Lystrans did not understand. Paul’s eloquence only convinced them all the more that this was a god speaking (**14:18**). But crowds are fickle. Quickly they turned from sacrifice to stoning when the Jews of Antioch and Iconium arrived. The hostile crowd stoned Paul, but God delivered him from this ordeal.

**By proper knowledge and by proper love.** One of the most difficult things for any human being, believer or non-believer, to break out of is his false (modern) framework. This is true in among scientists, as undeniably demonstrated by Thomas Kuhn (who became an anti-realist because of failing to distinguish between ontological truth versus empiriological truth), and it is true of believers. All of us *modern* believers come with false frameworks *into which* we naturally pigeonhole new biblical data and in the process corrupt that data. We see it with the pagans in this text as the superstitious crowd interpreted events in the light of their own mythology. They identified Barnabas as Jupiter (Zeus), the chief of the gods; and Paul, the speaker, they identified with Mercury (Hermes), the messenger of the gods. Jupiter was the patron deity of the city, so this was a great opportunity for the priest of Jupiter to become very important and lead the people in honoring their god. All modern Christians are plagued with ungodly, materialistic, reductionistic as well as superstitious frameworks regarding the nature of God, creation, spiritual power, and the nature of man. Apart from philosophical realism’s Whole Truth perspective, there is no solution. The entire framework about the nature of ultimate reality must be established in realism (in contrast to modernism) before the believer can really live and thrive in God and appreciate the greatness of God not only in special revelation of the Word of God, but in natural revelation, and thus *actually observe* the glory and nature of God in every tiny blade of grass: “*His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made*” (Rom. 1:20). One can either see God’s invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature on a natural level as one observes any created thing or he does not. No amount of biblical information in and of itself is going to give capacity *to see* this on a natural level. At best, all Romans 1:20 can do is give the believer “faith” that creation reveals this, but faith is not the same as seeing this directly or through first principles (e.g., sufficient causation). It takes a gestalt, a paradigm shift of enormous magnitude for

the modern believer to see God as *Esse*, the Act of Existence who gives to all things their acts of existence. In short, everything that exists is composed of two things: an essence and an act-of-existence. It is God who continuously gives all essences their very acts of existence. To have this proper knowledge is to break the curse of materialism and deism which afflicts modern believers and destroys their capacity to fully know and love their God by seeing His glory in nature (natural revelation) and the Word of God (supernatural revelation).

**Job 23:1–17.** Job continues to proclaim his innocence. Job reflects on two problems: injustices he experienced and injustices others experienced. Job wanted to present his case to God (23:1–7), but God remained inaccessible and (seemingly) unfair (23:8–17). In this section, Job complains that that God is hiding from him (23:1-12), and that God is frightening him (23:13-17).

**By proper knowledge and by proper love.** In verse 10, Job speaks about being in God's furnace of sufferings. This furnace was *not* due to Job's sin. The origin of this suffering was not even in the antecedent/perfect will of God. The source of this suffering was Satan, another created being. Many times we suffer because of the actions of other created beings, angelic or human. It is not like God woke up one morning and decided that Job needed suffering to grow spiritually. However, God does permit (consequent will of God) suffering and all suffering provides the *opportunity* for growth. However, we should never think that we *must* suffer to grow spiritually in loving and knowing God. Suffering may provide an incentive, but so does the filling of the Holy Spirit and life lived in concurrence with God on a moment by moment basis. Surely the Holy Spirit can give us more wisdom than some school of hard knocks, the latter of which still remains, many times, within the natural realm, which the Holy Spirit exceeds. We really do not *need* suffering to grow, even if suffering *can* provide extra motivation to focus on the Lord. Suffering is neither a necessary or sufficient cause for spiritual growth. On balance, one can gain far more growth by living in obedience and love for God without suffering, than the one who needs suffering to get back to loving and obeying God. However, regardless of the source of evil suffering, the believer is to focus on the Lord and understand that while God permits His people to be thrown into the furnace of affliction, He keeps His eyes on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. He knows how long and how much. We may question why He does not turn down the heat, but our attitudes in these questions will reveal evidences of love and knowledge or disdain and unbelief. All one has to do is look around and notice how some people go into the furnace of affliction and it burns them (destruction of character and love for God, for example, the Israelites in the wilderness) and some go into the furnace and become purer in their love for God (Abraham, Joshua, Caleb, Daniel). It is all about attitude to the Lord (love) and orientation to the Word of God (knowledge). The same fire that incinerates the faith and love of some believers also purifies the faith and love of other believers. *Quo Vadis?*

*Life in the Lord by proper knowledge and by proper love.*

*Pastor Don*