

One Reason for God's Judgment of Judah: Social Injustice

Micah 2

Micah 2:1-11 – *“Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. ² They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.*

³ Therefore thus says the Lord: “Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks; nor shall you walk haughtily, for this is an evil time.

⁴ In that day one shall take up a proverb against you, and lament with a bitter lamentation, saying: ‘We are utterly destroyed! He has changed the heritage of my people. How He has removed it from me! To a turncoat He has divided our fields.’”

⁵ Therefore you will have no one to determine boundaries by lot in the assembly of the Lord.

⁶ “Do not prattle,” you say to those who prophesy. So they shall not prophesy to you; they shall not return insult for insult.

⁷ You who are named the house of Jacob: “Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to him who walks uprightly?”

⁸ “Lately My people have risen up as an enemy— you pull off the robe with the garment from those who trust you, as they pass by, like men returned from war. ⁹ The women of My people you cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children you have taken away My glory forever.

¹⁰ “Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy, yes, with utter destruction.

¹¹ If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,’ even he would be the prattler of this people.”

Background Notes

The prophet Micah and the prophet Isaiah were contemporaries. They probably heard each other preach. In fact, both Isaiah and Micah made the same well known prophecy of the future: *“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.”* This prophecy is found in Micah 4:3 and Isaiah 2:4.

Both prophets ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah. Isaiah's ministry was concentrated primarily in the capital city of Jerusalem, while Micah ministered primarily in the countryside. Isaiah was knowledgeable in international affairs and well known in the royal courts. He ministered to kings like King Hezekiah. Micah, on the other hand, was more like a country preacher, and he was less well known than Isaiah. But there was nothing unsophisticated about Micah's little prophetic book! It carries the same punch as the larger book of Isaiah, then and today. Both are the inspired Word of God.

Micah is sometimes known as the “Amos” of the south. Just as Amos had preached against the social injustice and social sins of the northern kingdom of Israel, Micah spoke out against the social injustice in the southern kingdom of Judah. In chapter 2 we hear Micah speaking out against the social sins of Judah.

Doctrinal Points

1. God will judge the sins of social injustice.

One of the major reasons why God would have to judge His people was their **social injustice**. The people were so materialistic that they would lie awake at night, plotting how to gain more for themselves - even if it involved using force and oppressing the poor people (v1-2).

Let me ask you: do you ever lie awake at night and plot how to take advantage of someone, or knock someone down a peg or two, or get revenge on someone for what they said to you or against you? That is sin, and God will judge his people for this kind of sin.

The point of verse 3-5 is that Judah would be conquered and then the wealthy landowners would lose the property that they had wrongfully acquired. The property would then belong to the enemy - they would take it by force. Judah would reap what she had sown. When Judah was conquered, the property that the wealthy had wrongfully acquired would be taken from them – the enemy would seize by force, and there would be no redress.

In verses 6-7, we see that people didn't want to listen to negative sermons of judgment from the true prophets – they only wanted to hear pleasant messages that didn't threaten their comfort. (Sound familiar?) Little did the people realize that all the words of the Spirit of the Lord were for their own good - including His words of discipline and judgment! **All** of God's words are beneficial for those who are upright - then and today.

In verses 8-9, the social sins of the rulers and the wealthy class were once again brought out. They were likened to soldiers taking spoils from the helpless. They were the cause of broken homes and disrupted families. The same is true today. Think of the social sins in our own nation that have led to the break up of homes and families. How sad! As the end of verse 9 says, disrupted families detract from the glory of God.

Verse 10 is a prediction of the coming exile: *“Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy, yes, with utter destruction.”* Because the land was defiled with sin, the land itself would vomit out the sinners.

Verse 11 certainly has plenty of application today: *“If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink’ - even he would be the prattler of this people.”* The people of Judah preferred to hear false prophecies of good times to come, rather than heeding the truth of coming judgment because of their sin. They sought their own pleasure at the expense of the poor and needy.

The same is true today. The pleasure-seekers of today would rather enjoy the “good life” than hear the Word of God or do what is right. Parties are always more exciting and fun than Bible studies, or caring for the oppressed. God will judge the sins of social injustice.

2. God will restore the remnant of Israel.

Now comes the good news!

Micah 2:12-13 - *"I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of so many people.*

¹³ The one who breaks open will come up before them. They will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it. Their king will pass before them, with the Lord at their head."

Here we have the good news concerning Israel's future. Even though Israel turned away from the Lord and committed gross sin, yet in His grace God will restore a godly remnant of the Jewish people in the future.

But notice: this is a prophecy about the future of **Israel and the Jewish people**. It is **not** a prophecy of the New Testament Church. The Church is not a kind of "New Israel." These verses predict the future return of the Jewish people to their Land and to the Lord.

The stage is already being set for the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy. The state of Israel is a reality and many Jews have already returned. But there's more to come! There will be a great spiritual revival in Israel in the future. The nation will return to the Lord!

Notice that the Messiah is seen in a three-fold fullness for Israel in these verses:

- Their Shepherd, who leads them and removes obstacles before them
- Their King
- Their Lord God

What a great day that will be! God will restore the remnant of Israel.

Practical Application

Let's all do what we can to strengthen the family unit.

Back in verse 9 we saw that the broken homes and disrupted families of Micah's day detracted from the glory of God – and this is also true today. Intact families are very important, because the family unit is the foundation of the nation. But in Judah, family units were disrupted, and wealthy oppressors of the ruling class were actually promoting the break up of the family. So a great application from Micah 2 is "let's all do all we can to strengthen the family unit" - because this was one of the reasons why God had to judge the nation. God had to judge the nation of Judah for this sin.

One of the roles of the family unit is to reflect the glory and unity of God's family. In God's family, there is love, and fellowship, and authority, and respect, and honor. Our families should bring glory to God by modeling His family for a watching world.

Furthermore, the testimony and ministry of any New Testament Church is only effective when there is a nucleus of solid, committed families, so we all need to do whatever it takes to help strengthen Christian family units. And this is not just the job of our church leaders – it's a job for all of us.

Spend times of family fun and recreation, as well as times of serious conversations about living as believers in a culture that opposes Christianity. Involve your entire family in Christian service and in the ministries of your local church. Get together with other Christian families in social settings, to encourage one another.

Be sure to have family devotions! God's Word should be central in the Christian home. And make your devotional times interesting for your children! (If you just read through the book of Leviticus every night, you won't have much "family togetherness" during devotional times!) There are many ways you can emphasize the importance of God's Word. Read a variety of age-appropriate Bible storybooks. Occasionally ask your children to lead the devotions. Share your good ideas for family devotions with other families.

Pray together for God's work around the world. Help your children to understand what it's like to be a Christian in other countries by having "missionary nights." Make it fun as well as informative by introducing them to foods and customs of other cultures. Whatever you can do to strengthen the family unit for God is good!

For years I served on staff at a wilderness camp for boys. Some weekends were specifically set aside to strengthen relationships between fathers and sons. Many fathers are busy providing for their families, but they don't have time to develop a relationship with their sons. So we developed father/son weekends, when fathers could spend uninterrupted time with their sons at camp. They hiked together, cooked over campfires, and slept in tents together. It was an opportunity for the sons to show their fathers the outdoor skills they had learned at camp during the previous two weeks. Although the program was designed to strengthen the relationship between fathers and sons, it supported and strengthened the entire family unit.

God wants to see strong committed Christian families. It's the basis for a nation, and it's the basis for any really solid ongoing New Testament church. Let's all do what we can to strengthen the family unit!