

Scripture Lesson Text

MIC. 2:4 In that day shall *one* take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, *and* say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed *it* from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.

5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

6 Prophecy ye not, *say they to them that* prophecy: they shall not prophecy to them, *that* they shall not take shame.

7 *O thou that art* named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? *are* these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.

10 Arise ye, and depart; for this *is* not *your* rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even with a sore destruction.

11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, *saying*, I will prophecy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

NOTES

Micah Stands Firm for God

Lesson Text: Micah 2:4-11

Related Scriptures: Amos 7:10-17; II Chronicles 28:8-15; James 5:1-9;
II Peter 3:1-10

TIME: between 736 and 722 B.C.

PLACE: Judah

GOLDEN TEXT—"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever" (Psalm 37:18).

Lesson Exposition

NOTHING TO CLING TO—Mic. 2:4-7

No portion (Mic. 2:4). In this chapter, Micah identified many of the sins of Judah, specifying violations of the Mosaic Law. He did this to warn the people that God's divine punishment was on its way unless they changed direction immediately. They were so bad that they even devised evil plans while they were falling asleep at night and then carried out those ideas the next morning as soon as they had an opportunity (vs. 1). Among the things they did was covet and take fields and homes violently (vs. 2).

In carrying out such injustices, they were oppressing their fellow men and taking away their promised heritage.

God said, "In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation" (vs. 4). Those outside the land would make up a song to mock the people of Judah. At the same time, God's people would mourn with these words: "We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields." The time was coming when God would remove His blessings from His own people and

would Himself take away their property and give it to others.

They would, therefore, no longer have any portion, or allotment, left to themselves in their land. Enemies would take it all and force them into captivity. Their prideful self-confidence would be utterly destroyed.

No boundaries (Mic. 2:5). The entire system of dividing up land among God's people was about to be destroyed.

We know the fulfillment of this statement would come about because the land was going to be controlled by enemies. The remnant of Israel that would be left in the land would have no authority for dividing it up anymore. This is what Micah meant in saying there was going to be no one deciding boundaries "in the congregation of the Lord" (Mic. 2:5). The parceling of land was soon going to be done by the Babylonians and those who remained in the vicinity who were enemies of Judah. We see their presence in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

No prophesying (Mic. 2:6). Micah was apparently quoting false prophets in the first part of this verse, though it is

likely that many of the people were also calling out for Micah to stop prophesying. This was an attack on Micah for his ministry of faithfully declaring the words of God to them. It was a forceful demand that Micah stop giving out the message he was proclaiming. The attitude from the false prophets was that the people of Judah were God's people; as long as they continued to participate in worship rituals, God would not harm them.

What they were ignoring was the fact that God wanted heartfelt worship, not just empty, ritualistic worship. Going through certain motions did not satisfy Him.

The last part of this verse is difficult to interpret. *The Holman Old Testament Commentary* offers some helpful information: "The syntax and speakers are not easily clarified, but the purpose of the verse is clear. Micah and his supporters face a group of prophets, perhaps employed by the temple, who deny the doom and gloom of Micah. They continue to promise prosperity while Micah demands a new way of life or destruction" (Anders, ed., B&H).

We must remember that just because we do not like a certain message from God does not mean it is not true. The only right way to live for God is by hearing and obeying His Word, whether it agrees with our personal ideas or not.

No Spirit (Mic. 2:7). In a rather pointed implication, Micah addressed his audience as "thou that art named the house of Jacob." They were Jacob's descendants, but they certainly were not acting the way Jacob would have acted.

While the false prophets were assuring the people that God would never move against them, Micah asked whether the Spirit of God was restricted to any one line of activity. They were telling the people that just being God's chosen people was

their security and that they had no reason to worry about God's chastening and Micah's warnings. In this, they were clinging to promises and ignoring warnings.

It might be that their unbalanced message was coming from a flawed reading of Deuteronomy 26:18-19.

The people of Judah were forgetting that being God's children meant He would bless them if they obeyed and discipline them if they disobeyed, just as any human father would.

NO ONE TO BELIEVE—Mic. 2:8-11

Untrustworthy people (Mic. 2:8).

It is God who is speaking from verse 7 through the end of the chapter. In verse 8 He proceeds to enumerate some of the sins they were guilty of committing.

The Lord accused some of robbing others of their robes. The victims are portrayed as people walking by feeling safe and secure. These might have been travelers innocently passing through their land. It is also possible that this has reference to debtors having their garments confiscated because of their lack of payment. Exodus 22:26-27, for example, says, "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only."

The Hebrew word for "pull off" (Mic. 2:8) means "to strip" or "unclothe." It is a word with military connotations, describing typical actions of men of war against their victims or captives.

Displaced women and children (Mic. 2:9). It was bad enough to be cruel to the men, but those who were greedy were so obsessed that they also took advantage of the women and children. Perhaps it was from the widows that they exacted payments the women could not afford, causing them to lose their homes. Their homes

were their only possessions. It was one of the most cruel and thoughtless actions that could have been taken against them, and it gives an accurate portrait of how far the people of Judah were from God's standards.

Even the children were victims of cruelty, having their inheritance taken from them. Families were separated and displaced by the inability to maintain their lifestyles, and the children suffered tremendously from being taken into captivity. Micah described a hopeless situation being caused by those who lived self-serving lifestyles. God specified in His Law the care of widows and orphans, both of whom were now suffering greatly.

Lying prophets (Mic. 2:10-11). God had intended Israel's land to be a place of rest. If they had lived according to His Word, the Lord's desire would have been realized. "The terms of the Palestinian covenant (Deu 28-30) promised blessing and continuance in the land upon the sole ground of obedience; in case of disobedience there was but one alternative: exile. Micah, therefore, is pronouncing the breach of this covenant, or its nonfulfillment, and the exile which inevitably followed" (Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, Moody).

Moses referred to Israel's rest before they crossed the Jordan River: "For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety" (Deut. 12:9-10). Since it was not truly a land of rest for the Jews and since God was going to remove them from it, He encouraged His people through Micah to get up and get out of there.

At the time of Micah's message, escape was possible for them; but if

they did not leave immediately, they would experience the destruction of their land. They were putting their confidence in their own manner of living instead of in what God wanted from them. They would soon find out the prophets had lied to them. Consider Feinberg's application of this: "Those things that delude and are unstable satisfy the heart of the one who has turned a deaf ear to the word and revelation of God. When men turn from the truth, they do not occupy themselves with some higher substitute but with downright fables."

—Keith E. Eggert.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Micah specify so many of the people's sins and describe how bad they had become?
2. Who would be mocking, and what would be the lament when God moved against His people?
3. What would happen to the process of dividing land among God's people?
4. What was the real attitude of the false prophets about the security of the nation?
5. What did the false prophets say about Micah's message from God?
6. What did Micah ask about the ability of God's Spirit?
7. What is the realistic truth about God's dealings with His children?
8. How were some people in Judah taking advantage of others?
9. How was the treatment of children violating God's law?
10. What were the lies of the prophets causing the nation to do?

—Keith E. Eggert.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. To turn from God's ways is to sacrifice the blessings He has bestowed on us (Mic. 2:4-5).
2. It is foolish and disastrous to take the advice of those who reject God's Word (vs. 6).
3. We have nothing to fear if we walk according to God's Word (vs. 7).
4. To rob others of their dignity is to rob them of the glory, or blessing, God has for them (vss. 8-9).
5. Favorable outward circumstances cannot save us from the internal corruption of sin (vs. 10).
6. Sinners always welcome those who approve of their lifestyle (vs. 11).

—Jarl K. Waggoner.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What particular sins had led to God's coming judgment upon Israel (Mic. 2:4-5; cf. vss. 1-3)? Do such sins persist today?
2. Should we expect opposition when we simply declare the truth of God (vs. 6)? Why?
3. Why do people often accuse God of wrongdoing when they suffer for their own rebellion (vs. 7)? How should we respond to such accusations against God?
4. Why are we tempted to mistreat people (vss. 8-9)? Why is this such an offense to God?
5. Can unbelievers ever find true peace in this life (Mic. 2:10; cf. Isa. 48:22; 57:20)? How does the answer to this question inform our methods of evangelism?

—Jarl K. Waggoner.

Golden Text Illuminated

“The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever” (Psalm 37:18).

In today's lesson text, the Prophet Micah emphasizes the necessity to remain faithful to God's Word despite worldly pressures and persecution. And our golden text for this week gives us a promise from the Lord to cling to in times of discouragement.

First, the psalm assures us that “the Lord knoweth the days of the upright.” God's knowledge is not a cold, intellectual inventory, but an intimate, compassionate knowledge.

But in our verse, this compassion is reserved for the “upright.” The only way anyone can be upright before God is through the imputed righteousness of Christ that He bestows on all who place faith in Him. Through our justification by faith, we receive God's love as His newly upright children.

The second part of the golden text discusses an inheritance. This blessing ultimately came through Christ, a descendant of Abraham. Jesus made the way for God's people, Jew and Gentile, to be reconciled with God through faith.

Along with saving us from eternal destruction and giving us a way to God, Jesus gives us a much greater inheritance when we trust in Him. We become co-heirs with Christ, sons and daughters of God.

The truths in our golden text can bring hope to us as sojourners in a world hostile to the gospel. We are upright before God; He intimately knows our sufferings—past, present, and future—and He will fulfill His promises to us.

—Megan Hickman.