

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Micah 2:1-13

English Standard Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, July 5, 2015

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, July 5, 2015**, is from **Micah 2:1-13**. Please Note: Some churches will only study **Micah 2:4-11**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the **International Bible Lesson Forum**.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Micah 1:1-2

Background of Micah

(Micah 1:1) The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Micah was from Judah, the southern kingdom, and a town named Moresheth, located southwest of Jerusalem on a route to and from Egypt. When officials wanted to put Jeremiah to death, some of the elders arose and quoted Micah's prophecy in Jeremiah's defense (see Jeremiah 26:16-19). Jotham reigned [742-735], Ahaz reigned [735-715], Hezekiah reigned [715-687/686]. Samaria, the capital of Israel, fell in 722 BC to the Assyrians. Moresheth fell in 701 BC to the Assyrians. Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, fell in 586 BC to the Babylonians. Hezekiah may have heeded Micah's preaching, which may have led to his religious reforms that prevented the disaster and destruction that was about to fall upon Jerusalem in 701 BC, when the Assyrians conquered all of the surrounding cities in Judah.

(Micah 1:2) Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

The word of the LORD was for Israel, Judah, and all the earth, and still is. God created and owns all that He created. According to the Bible, God is the Lord and Judge

over all peoples and nations. On the basis of God's moral law (that God has written on the hearts of people and has revealed in a variety of ways), He will bear witness, as in a court of law, against the nations and people of the earth who violate God's law. He will do so from His holy temple, and Israel and Judah will serve as examples of how God will rule over and punish the people and nations that do not repent and turn to God for salvation.

Micah 2:1-13

Lesson

(Micah 2:1) Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand.

Similar to Amos, Micah also focused on the abuse of others by those more powerful. Many of those who were rich or politically powerful devised plans in the evening that they planned to execute the next day that would steal from or take advantage of others—perhaps “legally,” but immorally. Wicked people seem to always be able to find someone less powerful that they can abuse or cheat, and they often look for “legal” ways to do so.

(Micah 2:2) They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.

Many of those at the top of the power structure in Israel and Judah violated the commandment against coveting (see Exodus 20:17). Paul described the evils of coveting in Romans 7:7-8. Coveting led the wealthy and powerful to steal the homes and fields of the less powerful or less influential in society. Those they stole from lost the ability to deed their property to their descendants as an inheritance according to the law of God.

(Micah 2:3) Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster.

Micah spoke the word of God's judgment against those who devised evil. What they sowed, they would reap. They would lose the property they had stolen from others and also their own property. The "family" probably meant the kingdoms of Israel and Judah that permitted wickedness to flourish and even enabled it; in addition to the individual families who stole from their neighbors. They would no longer walk proudly, because they would be publicly disgraced by the judgment of God as a yoke on their necks.

(Micah 2:4) In that day they shall take up a taunt song against you and moan bitterly, and say, "We are utterly ruined; he changes the portion of my

people; how he removes it from me! To an apostate he allots our fields.”

The external enemies of Israel and Judah, and perhaps the victims of the wicked who had their property stolen, would taunt or make fun of the powerful and wealthy wicked when God brought them down as they justly deserved. Through the Assyrians and later the Babylonians, those at the top of the Israelite and Judean power structure and society would lament their loss of everything. Their enemies would parcel out their fields as they had parceled out the fields of the less fortunate for themselves.

(Micah 2:5) Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD.

After the Assyrians destroyed Samaria in 722 BC and after Jerusalem had to pay a heavy tribute to the Assyrians in 701 BC; and later, after the Judeans were taken into exile for 70 years in Babylon, God declared through Micah that none of those (and none of their descendants) who had devised evil and stolen from others would have any property divided and given to them. They had stolen the inheritance rights of others; therefore, as punishment they would lose the property and inheritance rights for their families.

**(Micah 2:6) “Do not preach”—thus they preach—
“one should not preach of such things; disgrace
will not overtake us.”**

Similar to the prophets being forbidden to preach in Israel (so that God had to send Amos from Judah to Israel), so those at the top of the power structure in both Israel and Judah tried to suppress the preaching of the truth. They did not want to hear any word of God that expressed judgment of their immoral behavior or warnings that God would punish them for their wickedness. They preferred to believe that because God favored them as His chosen people that they would never be punished by God or suffer the disgrace that the prophets foretold. They preferred to think that their continual amassing of greater wealth and land was an indication of God’s blessing upon them.

**(Micah 2:7) Should this be said, O house of Jacob?
Has the LORD grown impatient? Are these his
deeds? Do not my words do good to him who
walks uprightly?**

The nobles in Jerusalem argued against Micah’s prophecy of judgment using what God had said about himself and His promises to the nation. The LORD told Moses that He was slow to anger (Exodus 34:6). The theology of the wicked convinced them that God would not punish them because God is patient and slow to anger. Furthermore, they argued that their prosperity indicated that they

walked uprightly, and God's words would do good to them, unlike Micah's words that accused them of sin and foretold judgment. From looking carefully at this verse and trying to understand the original meaning, perhaps Micah also told them that if they walked up rightly, his words would do them good and they would repent of their sins and escape the judgment of God.

(Micah 2:8) But lately my people have risen up as an enemy; you strip the rich robe from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war.

Micah replied to them and identified himself with God's people—the people the wicked wealthy were oppressing. Not all who were wealthy were wicked, but many wicked wealthy controlled the power structures in Israel and Judah. These wealthy wicked were oppressing God's people, stealing from them and enslaving them contrary to God's law. They were making the equivalent of war against God's people. God enacted laws to protect His people, and the nobles in Jerusalem had become the enemies of God's people. If a poor person gave his cloak or robe as a pledge that he would repay his debt, the moment he missed a payment the wicked lender would take his land and sometimes make him a slave instead of graciously and patiently waiting for payment. The poor people were peaceful and trusted their political and religious leaders to protect them and do right; instead, their leaders misused

and reinterpreted God's law to enslave them and their children.

(Micah 2:9) The women of my people you drive out from their delightful houses; from their young children you take away my splendor forever.

Widows and their children were not cared for and protected as God's law stipulated, but in violation of God's law the wicked drove them out of their homes and off their land. The children who lost their homes also lost their homes and lands as the inheritance that God planned for them when He gave the law to Moses. God never intended for the strong and powerful in society to use their positions and His laws to steal the land of others. Rather, obedience and the rightful enforcement of God's laws would bring glory to God as the needs of everyone were met and the rights of everyone were respected.

(Micah 2:10) Arise and go, for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction.

Just as the wealthy in Jerusalem had told the women and children to leave their homes, so Micah warned that Jerusalem would become no place for the wicked wealthy to rest. Because God would judge them for their idolatry (uncleanness), they needed to arise and go, for God would destroy their homes in Jerusalem as punishment just as

their idolatry had destroyed others and stolen their homes. Idolatry always destroys with a grievous destruction, a destruction that will last throughout eternity for those who will not repent and obey God. Those who were righteous also needed to arise and go and leave the unclean and idolatrous Jerusalem before they were destroyed spiritually and perhaps physically along with the city.

(Micah 2:11) If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, “I will preach to you of wine and strong drink,” he would be the preacher for this people!

They commanded Micah not to preach the truth of God, so Micah told them what kind of preachers they wanted. They wanted preachers who would give them pleasure and justify their immorality—who would dull their senses and put them in a drugged or drunken state of confirmed selfishness—who would affirm their immoral ways of living and assure them of God’s blessings no matter what they did or how they treated others, because they were God’s chosen people—who would preach empty lies and false promises to them instead of God’s Word—who would preach the destructive pleasures of wine and strong drink, and who would encourage the immoral behavior that often follows a state of drunkenness and idol worship.

(Micah 2:12) I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set

them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men.

Micah ended this chapter with a message of hope. The survivors of Israel's fall (the descendants of those who had fled to Jerusalem) and the surviving Judeans in Jerusalem at the time of its fall to Babylon would be gathered together as a flock of sheep in a fold and be taken away from Jerusalem into exile. Though the time of exile would be God's judgment through the Babylonians, like a shepherd, God would lead them and go before them. Even in exile, they could find God, if they would repent and return to God, for the LORD would go with them and lead them. God would also lead His people back from Babylon to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile.

(Micah 2:13) He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king passes on before them, the LORD at their head.

In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, took King Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, captive and into exile in Babylon. In 587 BC, with the final fall of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took King Zedekiah into exile in Babylon. The walls of Jerusalem became rubble at the hands of the Babylonians in 587 BC, rubble that would need to be broken through so the Jews could pass through the gate to leave the city and go into exile. As their King, the LORD

would also lead them through the rubble of Jerusalem into exile in Babylon, and as their King, the LORD would lead them back again when the time of their punishment was ended on God's perfect timetable as Jeremiah foretold.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Describe one way that the wicked reaped what they sowed when God judged them.
2. Why did the wicked want the true prophets of God to stop preaching?
3. Give a reason why the wicked did not fear the prophets' threat of God's just judgment.
4. How did the wicked treat their fellow Judeans, especially in and around Jerusalem?
5. What kind of prophet or preacher did Micah say the wicked wanted to hear?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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