

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
July 5, 2015

Lesson Text: Micah 2:4-11
Lesson Title: No Rest for the Wicked

Introduction

Micah was one of the Twelve Minor Prophets who prophesied God's judgment on Israel and Judah. His name means "who is like unto Jehovah?" He is called "*Micah the Morasthite*" (Micah 1:1), having been born in Moresheth-gath (Micah 1:14), about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. Like the prophet Amos, he was a native of the country. Although Micah was in the southern kingdom of Judah, he prophesied to both kingdoms, but his main message was directed to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Micah was a spiritually empowered prophet. The secret of his power is recorded in Micah 3:8, "*But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.*" Micah needed God's power as he confronted the wretched state of Israel in her sins. Like every God-called preacher, Micah, through the power of the Holy Spirit fearlessly denounced sin and pointed sinners to the Lord.

According to Micah 1:1, Micah prophesied about the same time as Isaiah (740-690 B.C.), "*in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah*" (2 Kings 16-20; 2 Chronicles 28-32). His was a prophet of the poor and a friend of the oppressed. His heart went out to the downtrodden. The genuineness of his heart stands in contrast to the false prophets, who, as long as they were sufficiently paid, prophesied peace (Micah 3:5).

The book of Micah is easily divided by the thrice-repeated words, "*Hear ye*" (Micah 1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Chapters 1-3 focus on judgment and is addressed to all the people. Chapters 4-5 focus on comfort and are addressed specifically to the leaders of Israel. The final division, chapters 6-7, is a personal word of pleading to Israel to repent and turn to the Lord.

Our lesson text in Micah 2:4-11, is a portion of Micah's second message to God's people. In this chapter Micah describes the specific sins of the people. In Micah 1, Micah's first message denounced the people's sin against God (Micah 1:7). The sins Micah denounces in chapter two are sins against one another. You see, until man is right with God, he cannot be right with his fellowman.

The Punishment of the People (Micah 2:4-5)

Micah touched on many sore spots in the nation. The sins he lists were evidence of how much the people and their leaders, political and religious, had failed to do God's will. Everything Micah points to was a clear violation in God's law and His covenant with Israel. Sadly, all of these violations continued while worship and sacrifice were carried on as usual at the Temple in Jerusalem. Therefore the resulting judgment was justified.

In Micah 2:1-3, the prophet noted that many the people lay awake at night thinking up evil things to do the next day. They coveted what others had and would defraud one another without any remorse. They had absolutely no respect or regard for their fellow man.

Verse 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."

"In that day" is a reference to the "*evil time*" in verse 3. If the people continued to sin God would bring an end to it with judgment. God intended to put their "*necks*" (Micah 2:3) in the chains of Assyrian bondage. When that "day" came, God's people would be derided by those around them. "One take up a parable against you" means God's people would be verbally mocked by the nations around them. The "parable" is a reference to songs of mockery created and sung by Israel's neighbors.

"Lament with a doleful lamentation" most likely means a continuous and monotonous wailing because of coming judgment. The words of the "parable" and "lamentation" is "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 text suggests God's people would hear and possibly say themselves, "We are ruined, the Lord has given our land to another people."

Israel had a deep-seated pride that refused to allow her to imagine that the Lord would give her "land to another people." The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "*Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me*" (Jeremiah 49:4).

Verse 5

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

“Therefore,” or because of your sins, “thou,” representing the guilty people to whom Micah spoke, “shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.” The casting of “a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD” are serious words. Micah was telling the people that once they go into captivity, none would return to the land to claim their inheritance, or see it allotted by line. In other words, they would never see their property lines ran again!

“In the assembly of Jehovah” is a reference to the consecrated meeting place of the nation as a whole. Never again will this people stand in the presence of the Lord with their children to claim their portion of land. Sin resulted in their loss of inheritance and their personal and national identity.

The Preference of the People (Micah 2:6-11)

It was inevitable that Micah could not denounce the people’s sins and avoid opposition. In Micah’s day, messages from God that reveal sin were not popular and they certainly are not popular today. Just as the false prophets attacked Jeremiah (Jeremiah 5:31) and Amos (Amos 7:10-17) for preaching God’s truth, the false prophets also attacked Micah for denouncing the sins of the nation.

“In much of her history, Israel in the Old Testament had both good (true) and bad (false) prophets. The true prophets spoke for God to the people, after urging them to return to the moral and ethical values of the covenantal Law. The false prophets often said that God would not harm the people so long as they were involved in the outward ceremonial aspects of the Law. True prophets urged the nation to follow the covenant, as outlined in Deuteronomy 27-28.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.)

Verse 6

“Prophesy ye not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.”

Apparently the false prophets of Micah’s day were irate that he prophesied a coming judgment, so they told him to stop prophesying. “Prophesy ye not” means “stop preaching.” “Say they” is referring to the false prophets. “Them that prophesy” are the true prophets such as Isaiah, Amos, and Micah.

The Hebrew word for “prophesy” is not the normal word used for preaching or prophesying. It is a derogatory word meaning “to drip or flow.” The false prophets and people were making fun of Micah or one of the other true men of God, indicating they were spitting or sputtering as they prophesied. There is no escape for the wicked when they make light of God’s man delivering God’s message.

Micah records God's response to their demand that he and the true prophets stop preaching. He said, "They shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame." In other words, if God grants their desire and cuts off the preaching, there will be no "shame" for their sin therefore the people and nation will be utterly ruined. Preaching and exposing sin is necessary for conviction and repentance. Without preaching and reproof from God's Word there are no boundaries on evil or wickedness.

It is clear God's people preferred religious lies to spiritual truth. That is also true in America and in many churches. The prophet Isaiah warned the people that God would *"take away ...the mighty man...and the prophet"* (Isaiah 3:1-2). That is certainly the case today where God-called preachers and anointed teachers have been replaced by entertainers and prosperity seeking church leaders. Nations that do not want truth usually end up without it!

Verse 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?"

"O thou that art named the house of Jacob" are passionate words of appeal from Micah to the people. It seems God's people were now only God's people in "name." They wanted the blessing and benefits of being "the house of Jacob" but they certainly were not living like "the house of Jacob." God wanted them to be "the house of Jacob" in *nature*, not just in *name*.

Micah asks "is the spirit of the LORD straitened?" "Straightened" means shortened or curtailed. God has not shortened His mercy and kindness because of any change on His part. "Are these his doings?" The answer is no. God will still "do good to him that walketh uprightly." The "spirit of the LORD" does not change, nor was it His doings, when the nation drifted into idolatry. Still, if they would "walked uprightly" He would do them good.

One of the dangers of rejecting God's man and God's message is rationalizing and justifying sin. God is a patient and longsuffering God but His holiness and justice must not be forgotten. Micah's opponents just did not believe God would do what Micah said He would do. Earlier in the history of Israel, Joshua said, *"If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD"*

God of Israel" (Joshua 24:20-23). Obviously God's people did not believe what Joshua said.

Micah's words sound a warning for us today. Many Christians have the same optimistic approach to God as Israel and Judah did, deliberately focusing on one or two aspects of God's character and ignoring the rest. Only seeing the Lord as the Savior, Healer, and Deliverer from life's storms has left our nation and our churches in dire spiritual straits. Trusting in religious lies, which allow us to continue in our sin, will ultimately be our downfall. It was for Israel and Judah and it will be the same for us.

Verse 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."

In spite of all His people had done against Him, God still called them "my people." Although they were God's people, Micah said in effect, "Of late...you are the enemies of God" because of how you are treating God's people. Speaking as the voice of God, he accused them of "pulling off the robe" and "garments" from unsuspecting citizens. "Robes" and "garments" were a man's personal possessions. A man's "robe" was the garment he slept in. In other words, they were taking a man's rest and peaceful sleep from him.

Micah's choice of words indicates these acts of thievery took place in locations where the people felt secure. Most likely it was out in broad daylight. The fact that these thieves would attack in such places shows how the sin of greed of covetousness had taken control of their lives. They would do anything, anywhere, to get what they wanted.

Their actions were like "men averse from war." Meaning they were not secretive about what they had taken from others. Like a soldier would show off his spoils as he returned from war, the thieves were happy and carefree about showing off what they stolen.

Verse 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."

Tragically, in their quest to gain more and more, the thieves separated families by "casting out" (evicting) women from their houses and stealing their estates. This eviction most likely occurred because the "woman" found herself in debt to unjust creditors. Because she cannot pay her debt they will drive her out of her house and take away her ability to protect her children. What is even more shocking, they stole the inheritances of "their children. In doing so, God said,

“Ye have taken away my glory for ever.” When the Israelite no longer had land and inheritance to pass on to their children, it robbed God of His “glory.” It seemed God’s people and God’s nation no longer cared about anything. Including His “glory.”

Verse 10

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

The Lord was bound to react to such cruel injustices to His people by His people. “Arise ye, and depart” means “get out of the land.” “For this is not your rest” means “this is not what the land of Canaan was intended to be.” The false prophets and the people who listened to them had “polluted” the land. Now that the land was “polluted” with sin, “it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.”

When God brought the people into the land of Canaan, He promised rest, security, and safety. Sadly, their sin had nullified that hope. Now all that was left was “sore destruction.”

Verse 11

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

There are consequences to rejecting God’s man with God’s message and believing religious lies. Using sarcasm, Micah reveals the depth of the people’s deception by these false prophets. “Walking in the spirit” means “to utter wind.” “Falsehood” and “lies” refer to what is coming out of the mouth of these false prophets. If these false prophets prophesied “of wine and of strong drink,” Micah says, “He would be your kind of prophet.” “Wine and strong drink” would be a subject for the affluent.

Micah is saying, Israel would rather have a false prophet babbling words like a drunk man and talking about stuff people want to hear rather than hearing the truth from God’s man. Sounds a lot like us! What subject packs a church or brings in the money? It certainly is not “Prepare to meet thy God.” It is usually something like, “Sow your financial seed and expect a great harvest.” Or, “Tell God what you want. He’s obligated to give it.”

Conclusion

Micah, God’s faithful prophet, proclaimed the word of God. He exposed sin and announced coming judgment. The people chose to believe the false prophets and religious lies. The results was no rest in the land where rest was promised.

We live in a day where religious lies are more popular than spiritual truth. Prayerfully pause for a moment and consider what you accept as truth. What kind of spiritual input do you get in your life? Do you find God's man with God's message harsh, demanding, or even insensitive? When you go to church do you want to feel good or hear truth? Only the Holy Spirit can help you answer these questions.

Amen.