

**Bible Study Class**  
**Clayton Presbyterian Church**  
**Lesson 2 Micah**

**Opening prayer:** Lord of the prophets, You spoke to the Hebrews and they didn't listen. Help us to be more attentive to Your word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Today we will talk about chapters 2 and 3. We won't have Sunday School next Sunday July 31<sup>st</sup>.

Since Micah doesn't mention Samaria in chapters 2-5, we have to assume that it was already destroyed and these chapters were probably during the reign of King Hezekiah.

**Chapter 2 Prophet's second message describes specific sins**

While Micah prophesies of certain destruction, Judah enjoys a period of prosperity, and the wealthy indulge themselves further by oppressing the poor in the kingdom. Yet Micah advises the people of Judah not to expect to be spared from Israel's fate. As Israel suffered captivity by Assyria, so the people of Judah would be carried off to Babylon. This chapter deals with social injustice.

**Read Micah 2:1-2 Covetousness among God's people.**

V 1 They spend their time in bed plotting and planning to do evil the next day. Micah condemns the injustice and oppressions on the part of the rulers. All sin is bad before God, but premeditated sin is worse. Here Micah speaks plainly to those who devise mischief - in this case - those who oppress others through their greed and covetousness. Typically, thieves practice their work at night, under the cover of darkness. In the ancient world, law courts opened for business at morning light because the rising sun demonstrated light dispelling darkness. Micah sees the corruption of Israel's law courts and shows that they practice their theft and evil at morning light, when the courts open. What do we covet even though we have plenty?

V 2 Covetousness, violence, and oppression are the sins of Samaria, as well as Jerusalem. Few people realize that God is the source of all power and that all human authority is delegated and entails accountability. God gives power to do good not to do evil. People in power are using their power to increase their private wealth. I researched the presidents of the United States and who has the least wealth after they served several sources confirm, Harry Truman.

They are also ignoring the law about the selling of land. The basic precept of land ownership was that all belonged to God, owners are merely stewards of it. When

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the tribes were assigned their portion of the Promised Land, each tribe was to keep the land they were assigned. If someone had to give up land or they died without heirs the nearest relative was to get the land. Remember Boaz confronting the unnamed relative of Elimelech (Naomi's husband). The motto of the National Association of Realtors is to empower REALTORS® as they preserve, protect and advance the right to real property for all. Even today our laws about real estate reflect the rights that people have to land. There are some sins we never commit because we are never put in a place where we can commit them. The real test comes when it is in the power of our hand to sin and we keep faithful to the Lord.

**Read Micah 2: 3-6 God's proud people brought low.**

V 3-6 The Lord responds by stating that He, too, is plotting evil. A better way of translation maybe what they would call evil, because it is judgment against them. They were refusing to believe Micah's prophecy against them. God then turns the tables and says, "it is really my land and I will let a foreign nation control it for a while. One of the results of their sins was to be driven away from their inheritance. Verse 4 Does God refuse to listen? Sometimes, however, the insincerity of repeat offenders who plead for forgiveness and repeatedly promise to change but never do is so apparent that God does not extend his mercy. God sees that they have crossed a line and degraded his compassion and forgiveness. For them he withdraws his offer that he will relent if they repent; instead, he irrevocably decrees judgment and destruction. Such a time had come for the rich oppressors in the land of Judah. When the Assyrians invaded the land, the wealthy Israelites cried out to God for help, but the Lord turned a deaf ear to them—just as they had mercilessly ignored the cries of the poor people they had mistreated. In verse 5 may be translated as "others will set your boundaries then" or "the people of the Lord will live where they are sent." Verse 6 seems to be false prophets speaking to Micah. False prophets didn't speak about the need for repentance. In Micah's day the false prophets seemed to represent the people and not God. God gave them what they gave others. They are robbing the innocent of their very clothing and evicting women with their children unnecessarily. Micah rebukes the pride among God's people and announces that in they are not fit to live in the land because of all the pollution they have created. The judgment coming on Israel by the conquering Assyrian Empire - will leave their land in the possession of strangers. Verse 6 Because of her idolatry, Israel would no longer have special

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insights into God's direction. Instead, she would experience dark, dismal times with no word from God to comfort or enlighten her.

**Read Micah 2:7-9 God's people reject the word of His prophets.**

V 7 God's word will be received by His people who obey Him, and it will be rejected when they do not obey. This is addressed to all twelve tribes. This verse also seems to be a reply to those who don't believe that God could be angry with them. Micah began his ministry in the reign of Jotham - but nobody listened. Then he prophesied during the reign of Ahaz - but nobody listened. Finally, he prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah - and the leaders and the people repented. Micah didn't give up, even though results were slow in coming. Micah preached for anywhere between 16 and 25 years before there was any response.

V 8 They oppress the poor. For you steal the shirts right off the backs of those who trusted you, who walk in peace. They rob peaceable travelers, widows, and orphans, stirring up God's wrath.

V 9 They have problems of the slums. The landlords are heartless. News flash, on the nightly news it was reported that landlords have raised rents 19% in the last year. This talks about houses that were confiscated because they were unable to make rental payments. Think about those news stories of apartments where landlords refuse to make clean-ups or repairs.

**Psalm 68:5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. (RSV)**

**Read Micah 2:10-11 God's people embrace false prophets.**

V 10-11 Micah exposes the lies of false prophets showing that they can never really give rest. The words of false prophets are defiled, and bring utter destruction instead of the peace, rest, and restoration of God's Word. They want to hear false prophets approve and applaud drunkenness. The false prophets were confirming the nation in its ungodliness by telling lies. With biting sarcasm Micah reveals the attitude of the people toward God and His revelation. People didn't mind prophecy as long as it didn't interfere with their conduct. Recognition of God's right to set moral standard was out of the question. With judgment looming on the horizon - especially for the northern kingdom of Israel - there were false

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prophets who spoke of days of wine and drink, giving false comfort and hope to a deceived people.

**Read Micah 2:12-13 Promise of Restoration**

V 12-13 The future regarding the remnant. The Lord will ultimately regather the remnant. He says that the Lord will multiply that remnant. The remnant will not be few; there will be many people brought back to the Lord and His ways. Though judgment was promised because of the great sin of God's people, they could not "out-sin" the grace and goodness of God. He still promises restoration to the remnant of Israel. The sudden transition from judgment to grace in these verses is typical for Micah's prophecy. These verses allude to the coming Messiah who will lead them out of their captivity. Jesus may have been referring to this prophecy.

**Read John 10:7-11**

**Chapter 3 Prophet's third message denounces leaders for sins**

In this chapter, Micah is very bold in reproving and threatening the great men that were the ringleaders in sin; and he gives the reason in verse 8 why he was so bold, because he had commission and instruction from God to say what he said, and was directed by a higher spirit and power than his own. Previously, Micah addressed his comments to God's people in general. Now he specifically speaks to their leaders, because they have both a special responsibility and accountability before God.

**Read Micah 3:1-4 The sins of the princes**

V 1-4 Micah begins this second oracle with a question? Is it not for you to know justice? Micah is talking to the leaders of the people who think that they are above the law. The heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel, are called upon to hear what the prophet has to say to them. The implication of his question isn't just knowledge, if you know what to do, then do it. Fred emphasized this point when Jesus answered the lawyer. Don't just know something, take action. Those who have the awesome responsibility of leadership should know the meaning of justice. Justice is used in the sense of fairness and equity in governmental administration. Matthew Henry tells us they hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good and do good; and they love the evil, delight in mischief. This being their principle, their practice is according to it; they are very

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cruel and severe towards those that are under their power, and whoever expects their mercy will be disappointed. The language of the prophet becomes vividly emotive as he describes the harsh treatment directed against the poor. He pictures the civil leaders as treating the exploited classes like animals being butchered and prepared for eating. The skin was torn from them and their flesh butchered. Because they had so treated the poor, the Lord would not hear these merciless authorities when they cried to him. Those who violate God's covenant cannot expect him to maintain the blessings of the covenant. Instead of being shepherds of the sheep, as rulers are meant to be, these politicians were wolves, turning the sheep into meat for the pot and flesh for the caldron. When their calamity comes, God will not hear their cries for help. Do we know of that today? Cultural Background Study Bible tells us Micah is not arguing that the rulers of Judah and Israel practiced cannibalism. Rather, he uses the distant reference to the horror of human sacrifice and combines it with the image of an everyday meal. The cooking pots of Israel and Judah were small enough that larger bones had to be broken up in order to make the common stew. The combination of human sacrifice with the mundane details of family dinner creates a particularly vivid image of the everyday cruelty of these leaders. Verse four tells what happens when they cry to the Lord. He doesn't hear them because they have been unmerciful to those under them. Micah goes on to illustrate how terribly the leaders of Israel and Judah "use" the people - as if they were cannibals feasting on the people of God. This reminds us the people never exist for the sake of the leaders, but leaders are there for the sake of the people. A leader should never serve God's people dominated by the question, "What is in it for me?" This is one example of God's judgment against the corrupt leaders. When they cry out for God's help, He will remain silent. We often use the benediction from Numbers, "May His face shine upon you." This passage reminds us that because God doesn't look on sin, His face is sometimes turned away from us.

**Read Micah 3: 5-8 The sins of the false prophets**

V 5-8 Micah addresses another group of leaders in Israel, the false prophets of the time. Some have interpreted the phrase as describing the harm inflicted on the people by the lying prophets, as harmful as a serpent's bite. They made it their business to flatter and deceive the people: They make my people err, lead them into mistakes, both concerning what they should do and concerning what God would

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do with them. God announces that He will bring the false prophets into complete confusion and disrepute. They will have no answer from God and therefore they shall be ashamed. They were not blind leaders of the blind, for they saw the ditch before them, and yet led their followers into it. They made it all their aim to glut themselves. Like Balaam in Numbers, the prophets of Micah's day appear to have been offering their services to the highest bidder. It seems to have been a typical practice, even with Israelite prophets, for the inquisitor to offer some present to the seer in return for their message. Prophets went by the title *apilum* which means "answerer." Micah turns this title against such prophets with the curse that they will not supply the "answer" that they advertised. Micah uses the language of uncleanness and mourning with his metaphor "cover their lips" to describe their shame.

V 6-7 The false prophets would chant "Peace" to those who paid them well and predict war to those who would not pay. Therefore, God would withhold from them the knowledge of His will. They would receive no answer from God. God will be silent to all who lead the people astray. The end would come for these religious hucksters. While they were basking in the sunlight of power and affluence, the sun would go down on their prophesying and the resultant night would be devoid of vision or divination. It would be a time in which false predictions of peace would be discredited by the reality of the captivity. These prophets would "cover their faces" literally "cover the beard", an expression connoting deep mourning. What is their punishment? That they shall be involved in troubles and miseries with those to whom they had cried peace. They will be deprived of all comfort and any hope of comfort. They shall be silenced, and all their pretensions to prophecy forever shamed. They never had any true vision; but it was all a sham, and they were cheats and impostors.

V 8 is a key verse because Micah is telling what his mission is: **But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.** Micah contrasts his prophetic activity with that of the false prophets. He asserts that he was filled with power "with the help of the Spirit." The implication is that the false prophets were motivated by greed. The word "justice" is used frequently in the Old Testament as the crystallization of the ethic of the law. Because Micah was not violating the covenantal standards, he stood in sharp contrast to the religious leaders who participated in and encouraged the social exploitation of their time.

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Because Micah was guiltless of crimes against his fellow Israelites, he could stand before his adversaries with the power of moral courage and a clear conscience. Matthew Henry describes him, "he had an ardent love to God and to the souls of men, a deep concern for his glory and their salvation, and a flaming zeal against sin. He had likewise courage to reprove it and witness against it, not fearing the wrath either of great men or of great multitudes; whatever difficulties or discouragements he met with, they did not deter him nor drive him from his work; none of these things moved him. And all this was guided by judgment and discretion; he was a man of wisdom as well as courage; in all his preaching there was light as well as heat, and a spirit of wisdom as well as of zeal. Thus was this man of God thoroughly furnished for every good word he had to say, and every good work he had to do." Under the Old Covenant, the law was not written on the heart of the believer and the Holy Spirit did not indwell each believer in the same way as under the New Covenant.

**Read Micah 3:9-12 Sins of leaders of Jerusalem**

V 9-12: The address to the leaders of the house of Jacob continues with a biting portrayal of their sins. Micah accuses them of despising justice. The word for "despise" means utter abhorrence of something. Injustice of rulers and love of money of prophets. The coming destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon and not by Assyria. Micah foretells the ruin of a capital city. Micah was empowered by the Spirit of the Lord to declare God's message to Israel and Judah. The mercenary rulers, priests, and prophets thought that they were safe, but Micah announced that Jerusalem would be reduced to heaps of rubble. As the leaders discharged their duties, they did so with bloodshed and greed, motivated by their desire for personal gain. Characterized by avarice and violence, their whole system of government inevitably led to corruption. These leaders maintained a form of external religion based to some extent on the covenantal relationship. "Is not the Lord among us?" they asked. But they had lost sight of the ethical requirements of the covenant and felt that their historical relationship to the Lord would prevent the onslaught of misfortune. This optimistic but unfounded trust is described as "leaning on the Lord." It was a kind of trust, but one devoid of obedience to God. Micah is faithful and forthright to tell the rulers, prophets and priests of Jacob and Israel of their wickedness, injustice, perversion, bloodshed, bribery and materialism. All this is so while, at the same time, they claim God's presence with

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them. They will be churned up, ruined, and put in heaps when God judges them. Because of the actions of the corrupt religious and civil leaders, the predicted doom would become a reality. Micah includes the destruction of the temple, the visible sign of God's presence, in his prophecy. The symbol of the people's empty religion would perish. The image of de-urbanization and abandonment is created by Micah's plow and forest language, but again, these are merely metaphors for destruction. Jeremiah quotes this prophecy and dates it to the reign of Hezekiah, but we do not know whether Hezekiah's positive response to this prophecy should be related to the deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 BC, to the decision to stay away from Assyria altogether in 712 BC, or to some earlier conflict. They threw Jeremiah in jail for his prophetic message of coming judgment. About 100 years after Micah Jeremiah's life was preserved because of Micah.

**Jeremiah 26:18 Micah of Mo'resheth prophesied in the days of Hezeki'ah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.'**

The leaders of Jerusalem had a false confidence in religious ritual and form. All the while, judgment was appointed for Jerusalem unless they repented.

In her overview of Old Testament 101 Jodi Green reiterates that if something is repeated, God really wants us to hear it. We find repetition not only in Micah but in the other prophets of his time and earlier. The Israelites wanted to fit in with the neighboring countries just as we want to be peaceful with all nations. Jodi emphasizes that while we are tempted by the desire to identify with our culture, we must choose to follow God more closely.

Closing prayer: As we go from Sunday School to worship, give us the spirit of humility to serve you better. Help us to remember that we are never on our own. In Jesus' name, Amen. Adapted from [://www.living-prayers.com/children/Sunday school\\_prayer.html](http://www.living-prayers.com/children/Sunday_school_prayer.html)

Micah 2:1-2	John 10:7-11
Micah 2: 3-6	
Micah 2:7-9	Micah 3:1-4
Micah 2:10-11	Micah 3: 5-8
Micah 2:12-13	Micah 3:9-12