

Prophecy Without sugar Micah 2:1-13

Greed amongst the rich

Land sales and sell outs or Covetousness and materialism 2 :1-5

What do you do at night in bed ?

Review the day gone past and prepare the tomorrow.

The rich and powerful people in Israel schemed how they could add to their land and wealth at the expense of those already poor. Greed is their driving force, keeping them awake at night. At daybreak they put their plans into action.

Chapter 1 spoke of sin and transgressions, Chapter 2 is more specific speaking of the iniquity (wickedness) and evil of individuals. No punches are pulled by Micah.

These plans are actively practised by evil doers with the purpose of hurting others. The wealthy city rich folk are fleecing the ordinary people - they are just ruthless, efficient, profitable businessmen. They are the make it happen men. A tiny, wealthy, arrogant smug achieving minority.

They had good business sense - how dare Micah hint at fraud and talk of their plundering the poor. They "defraud" in v.2 literally means to oppress the poor - it contains the thought of violence, intimidation, physical

assault, as well as dishonest scales, extortion rounded off with a corrupt legal system.

Today is no different, with conglomerates merging, making industrial and financial giants, who are no more than corporate raiders and asset strippers, for themselves and their share holders.

By so doing they make many unemployed and are oppressing the poor, (e.g. Tesco terms of vegetable buying)

Banks are foreclosing on loans. Building societies are repossessing family homes daily. It's a society of more for less. To the man behind the desk they are just names on debts, not individuals with families. The bread winner and wage earner loses his job and income, the wife her home and their young children are deprived of what should be basic to all (v. 9) They have no place called home any more.

What we see done to individuals here is done to the poorer nations on a global scale.

The rich coveted what was their neighbours, in breach of the 10th commandment. Their action showed a complete disregard for God who owned the land and gave it to the families of Israel to use. The whole land belonged to God who had distributed it carefully though the 12 tribes and the families of them. There were strict instructions to avoid exploitation of the poor, in particular the law of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-12). But

these property barons showed nothing but contempt for Gods law and property rights. (Lev 25:2,23,38)

These rich money grabbers will not listen to Micah and repent. So God himself speaks and declares He will act against them.

God is just. These land grabbers will similarly cry in their distress "we are utterly ruined" v.4

Though this paragraph is full of woe, it ends with a glimmer of hope. Not for the wealthy land barons, but ordinary people. Micah sees beyond invasion, destruction and exile; to a time when the land will be redistributed again, as it was by the priests in the first place. (v.5 Num 26:55-6 Joshua 19:51)

Prophecy without sugar 2 :6-13

Oh shut up Micah. You don't know what you are talking about. Call yourself a man of God. You haven't got a clue. Stop misrepresenting God. God is kind, forgiving and loving - it is unthinkable that God would act in the way you suggest. God would not act against the best economic interests of his chosen people. Preachers should not address issues of daily behaviour or business ethics. If they must talk about spiritual matters they should talk about prayer and worship not fraud and corruption.

What did Micah know of property and finance, - nothing. There would be no divine judgement on legitimate business activity.

In rejecting Micah they listen instead to counterfeit prophets who tell them what they want to hear, and making a good living out of it. Those who promise nice feelings and a land flowing not only with milk and honey, but plenty of wine and beer (v.11) It was no different in the NT times, as Paul warned Timothy.

2 Tim 4:2-5

They spoke sweet nothings full of empty clichés. They told them stories they would enjoy. They did not talk about God and what God wanted or proclaim his word.

This was nothing strange - it happened to Jeremiah and Amos for example (Jer. 5:31, Amos 7:10-17) What they wanted were preachers who would endorse their way of living, trading and business practices.

The people participated in the nations religious services, believing they would never incur God's wrath even though their hearts were not in it. After all they were Abraham's children. The limitless credit card to eternal peace and prosperity - with no credit limit put on sin. They totally forgot that most of God's promises are conditional - except the one that says he will love you.

All actions have consequences.

For those who would listen there was a message of hope hidden in Micah's words, v.10 "Get up and go away." Jerusalem was doomed. Escape when you can.

This too was echoed in the NT prior to another fall of Jerusalem. The Christians fled from Jerusalem between sieges before the city fell finally to Rome in AD 70. Luke 21:20-4 (Matt 24:15-16 See Matt 24 sermon & unfound references there. S Press 94 Luke page 96).

Consolation, a hope for the future

There is the glimmer of hope at the end of the first dark tunnel that Micah paints.

As well as announcing judgement on sin and idolatry; the prophet had a message of hope. In spite of all those who were rebellious, there always was, and always would be, a faithful remnant who would trust God and seek to do his will. It is with them that the real future of blessing will lie. The very notion of a remnant suggests survival of a small minority by the skin of their teeth; but the bulk of the nation will not survive ! "I will surely gather all of you" v 12 All the remnant - not one will be lost.

Conclusion

Remember the rot began with coveting. How do we overcome the temptation in our ever present acquisitive society.

Combat it **1.Tim 6:6-10** (Godliness with contentment is great gain)

Phil 4:11b-13 (learned to be content)

Micah spoke against easy believeism, against those who make it easy to sin and to justify it, within the current social and economic climate.

The bad news is that God's standards do not change like political opinion or the weather !

Think about what message a Micah would bring to our nation today ? How could that message be most effectively communicated?

Can little you make a difference to the future of a village, town or nation?

If there had been ten righteous persons between Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities would have been spared judgement.

Jesus said - You are the salt of the earth.

Small, seemingly insignificant, but essential to the well being of the nation.

[And Jesus said - **Matt 10:29-31** (sparrows & hairs)]

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