

1. I thought it'd be a good idea to open this study with a question the apostle Peter asked about 800 years after Micah wrote this book: The question is, "If judgment begins with believers, what will happen to non-believers?" (Based on 1st Peter 4:7.) That would make us ask, why does God have to judge us anyway? Since He's in this judging mood, why does it have to begin with us? To ask a similar question, if we're saved by His grace alone, why must we face judgment? I'm asking in why is God tougher on us Christians (as implied by Peter) than on nonbelievers? I'm guessing by now that I've frighten you away from reading any further. If I haven't please hang in there a little longer as I tell you what this little, seven-chapter book of Micah is all about.
 - a) The short version is it condemns God's people for failing to live as He desires. If you have been with me through the last few lessons on the Minor Prophets, the last few books have been focusing on God's relationship with other nations in the area. We studied the book of Obadiah, which focused on Edom (part of Jordan today) and then we studied Jonah when God called him to preach to the capital of the Assyrian Empire (Part of Iraq today). What I'm getting at is it seems like God's gotten His focus off the Israelites to focus upon what's going to happen to other nations that are around them.
 - b) That leads me back to my opening set of questions: Why does judgment begin with us? I assume most of my readers are Christians. Why do we get a stricter judgment than those who don't believe in Him? Again, if we're saved by grace, how and why are we judged in the first place? I'm reminded of the classic pair of questions: 1) Do you believe Jesus died for every sin you've ever committed and 2) What have you done about it? The second one is the key issue of Micah as well as most of the other books we've been studying as we've gone through the Minor Prophets. As to the question of why we have a stricter judgment, the short version is we've got more information than nonbelievers and we're accountable for what we know. The bad news is knowing your bible is God holds you accountable for what we know or should know about Him. The good news about knowing our bible well is we draw closer to Him when we stud His word. Hopefully, that is why you're here as I go through these books in the first place.
 - c) OK John, we already had a bunch of "judgment lessons" as we went through the books of Hosea and Amos. For those of us who've read these Minor Prophet studies, isn't this a bit repetitive at this point? Why have another prophet "beat us over the head" with what it is the Israelites are doing wrong and convict us of sin when we've had a lot of that already?
 - i) First the good news. God's not to say to us on judgment day, you did this and that wrong, therefore you get a small place in heaven for eternity! Forgiven means just that, forgiven. God's not going to list our sins, and say, "remember that one?" We are held accountable as a witness for Him and the key question is always a matter of what have we done with our time and resources since we have believed Jesus is God and paid the price for all our sins?
 - ii) In a sense, that's what the judgment is all about. God will judge us, but not so we'll find out which Christians go to hell. Revelation speaks of two judgments. The one we want to be at is where believers are judged based on how we've lived our lives and what we did with it. The second judgment is the one to avoid. That was what Peter was talking about in my opening question of this lesson.
 - iii) That leads me back to the issue of why so many prophets focus on God's judgment of believers? Yes, each prophet has unique things to say and they do overlap. God wants to be "repetitive" as that's the best way to learn. There's an old teaching joke that goes, "First announce what you're going to say, then say it, then repeat it". It'll take that repetition in order for an idea to sink in our heads. For expert witnesses in a trial or someone plugging a product, repetition is a necessity for our points!

2. OK you may think, that may be interesting and most of us know all of that is true, but what does it have to do with the book of Micah? The short version is he preached around the same time era as Isaiah as well as a few other prophets. He mainly preached to the Southern Israel Kingdom but his message also had a few condemnations for the Northern One as well. Although his book isn't very long, Micah tells us that he preached during the time of three Southern Israel kings. All that means is Micah was on the scene being God's prophet for a long time, but this little book is all we know about his preaching. The prophet Jeremiah, who lived a half century after Micah did quote him in his book. Jesus quotes Micah in Matthew 10:34-36. Therefore I'll make this point about his legitimacy as a prophet: If you believe Jesus is God, then you have to believe Micah was called to be a prophet of God as Jesus quoted him in the Gospels.
3. Let me focus on the "when" for a moment: Micah was written about 750BC, plus or minus. Israel was split in two nations at that time. He was alive when the Northern Kingdom of Israel came to an end, as well the conquering of some of the South Kingdom towns as well. The last living king during the time of Micah was Hezekiah. That king lead the South out of idolatry for awhile, and caused God to hold off judgment on the Southern Kingdom. My point of all of this is Micah was a prophet sent by God that lived in a time of repentance. It meant some people did accept what Micah preached as well as Isaiah as both of them preached to turn to God around the same time.
4. Now that I've got the "when" covered, let me talk a little more about "where and why": In Verse 1 it says Micah came from a small town in the "South" that happens to be about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. I read that as God saying, "I took this nobody from nowhere and made him famous to the point where millions of people have studied what he wrote." If you don't think you can be used by God, realize Micah was from "nowhere" picked by God to deliver His message. Yes, you might say, "But maybe God picked him because he honored God. I'm too messed up to ever be a witness for Him." If there is one thing I've learned living the Christian life is that God's willing to use anyone willing to make him or herself available to Him for His use."
 - a) Here was Micah. Probably lived out a good life of at least 50 years and maybe a lot more. I suspect he wrote this little book near the end of his life as if to say, "God picked me to go preach to my fellow Israelites. I've been telling them to live as God desires and turn back to the God who got them there in the first place. Since I've been doing this my whole life, now I need to write down my key points." No, we do not know exactly when Micah was written, but since he lists the kings who reigned during all the time he preached, it must have been late in his career when he wrote it. To keep it simple, it's around 750-700BC.
 - b) OK then, I covered the when, the who, the where (Southern Kingdom) and the what. All I have to do now is explain why: The main issue is that most of the Israelites living around Micah were ignoring God and turning to idols. To put that in our vocabulary, we're more interested in politics or sports or "things" than God. Reading books like Micah if nothing else, remind us to "keep our eye on the ball" as to why we were created in the first place!"
5. Believe it or not, that leads me to my lesson title, "why does judgment begin with us anyway?" As you can tell, I've been discussing that for almost two pages now. While I haven't discussed any of the specifics of what we're doing wrong, we'll cover that as we go through this book.
 - a) The first two chapters of this book explain why God's going to come down hard on Israel at that time. The point for us is not to repeat those same mistakes. With that said, I'd say it's time to start my verse-by-verse commentary on Micah to see what it is God wants us to learn through this book.
6. Micah 1, Verse 1: The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah--the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
 - a) There is a term used in the business world called "Scope of the Work". That's where we'll define what it is we have to accomplish. Here Micah defines his scope: He preached his message while during the lives of three Southern Israelite kings. The scope of his message covered the "what's going to happen to both Samaria and Jerusalem."

- b) To explain that last one a little better, it might be like saying, "Let me tell you what's going to happen to London, Paris and Berlin, when we're really thinking of England, France and Germany. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom and Jerusalem was the main city of the Southern Kingdom. So why did Micah only list the Southern Kings? Maybe it was because the Northern Kingdom was already "beyond hope" and by the time Micah is writing this down, the Northern Kingdom didn't exist anymore. I suspect the reason that no kings were listed up north is it is Micah's subtle way of saying "they're beyond hope".
 - c) Speaking of the "where" issue, Verse 1 also tells where Micah is from. The verse says he is from Moresheth, which as I said in the introduction is a small town in Israel. It's about 20 miles to the southwest of Jerusalem. Now that you know that, you can forget about it.
 - d) You might find it interesting that in effect Micah is the only book in the Minor Prophets to be addressed to both kingdoms. If you don't care about that ancient history, just realize it like all the books of the bible has things for us as Christians to learn as well. Paul said all scripture is profitable for learning (Paraphrase of 2nd Timothy 3:16). One of my jobs with this lesson is to explain how Micah fits that bill.
 - e) Now that I've explained all the background of Verse 1, realize Micah isn't done explaining his "scope of his work". He continues on that issue in Verse 2:
7. Verse 2: Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it, that the Sovereign LORD may witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. ³ Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place; he comes down and treads the high places of the earth.
- a) Even though Micah was sent to preach to the Israelites, Verse 2 expands that scope to tell us this message is for all people. To paraphrase Micah, "Attention everyone, whether you like this or not, God's coming to earth to judge all people who've ever lived, so repent."
 - b) That concept is full of things we need to discuss: If God is "everywhere" and knows about all things (by definition) how can God literally come to earth and how can He judge every person who ever lived? That question implies that God would have to come in a form we can relate to (such as a human) and imply that all people get resurrected so it will literally happen (that all people be judged). Yes, we Christians refer to it as Jesus Second Coming, but the point is God's coming down in "human form" to judge all people.
 - c) Does this mean there will be a long line that we must stand in? I've always figured that if God is God, He'll find a way that it'll happen much quicker than that. Whether we like it or not, the point is all of us have to face God's judgment, which was the main point of my opening discussion. For Christians it means we get eternal rewards based on how we did live out our lives with the information we had about God. For nonbelievers, it's about the information they did have or was available to them and what they did with it.
 - d) Let's back up and think about this situation a different way: Why is Micah getting so "hot and heavy" to start his book? Why not just say, "Hey my name is Micah and I was sent to preach repentance to the Israelites back when I lived millenniums ago?" Why tell us that God will judge the whole world? The answer is to get all of our attention. If the message was just for the Israelites we might think, "Well, who cares about them? I've got my own life to live and if God wants to wipe them out that's His business". By Micah reminding all of us that we must face God's judgment, He's getting our attention as well.
8. Verse 4: The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.
- a) If you think I'm exaggerating about what Micah was sent to preach, realize that when that nation was destroyed, it didn't mean "Mountains melted and valleys split apart". Yes, one can argue that Micah was being colorful, but if there is one thing I've learned by studying the bible for many years, is it's always safer to take it more literally than less so. I suspect that when I get judged I'll be in less trouble with God saying, "I was too literal" versus not being literal enough. Therefore, if God says when He comes to earth, it'll cause mountains to melt and valleys to split apart, if that is a real possibility, I'll take it as literal.

- b) My point is whatever judgment Micah is talking about here, it's bigger in scope that when the nation of Israel was conquered all those millenniums ago.
 - c) One of the things I've been pounding while teaching prophetic passages in the bible is for us to realize that God works in "patterns". It just means that just as the two kingdoms of Israel were judged for failing to be a witness for God all those millenniums ago, so God is going to judge all people based on what we know about Him and what we did with that information. As I said in the introduction, I like to summarize God's judgment on two key questions: 1) Do we believe Jesus is God and 2) What have you done about it? I believe it is effectively what Micah is doing here.
 - d) In other words Micah's saying, "God's going to judge all people one day, and let me give you a soon to occur example, (from his perspective) of His literal judgment based on how the Israelites are living around me at this time. It'd be like saying, "You want proof God's going to judge all people? Watch what's going to happen soon around here as an example of that judgment!"
 - e) It's kind of a "don't mess with God" type of message. Whether we like it or not, this is His world, and we must live by His rules! His rules are essentially to accept His existence and to live as He desires. For the Christian that means accepting His free-gift of salvation and using our lives as a witness for Him.
 - f) I'm well aware this is the "fundamentals" of Christianity, but hey, we're only on Verse 4 of Chapter 1 of a seven-chapter book. It is as if Micah's saying, "Let me get the basic's down before I start on the specific issues of sin and repentance that I want to cover in this book. Speaking of getting into specific's, Micah's back to his timeframe in the next verse.
9. Verse 5: All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the house of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem? ⁶ "Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations.
- a) Remember how I said Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom and Jerusalem was the capital of the Southern one? Here in Verse 5, Micah is telling us that he was sent to preach repentance to both places. Micah's essentially saying that the problem's all over Israel that people are ignoring God.
 - b) Back in Verse 1, Micah listed three kings that ruled when he preached. By the time of the last one, the Northern Kingdom was gone. My point is this particular section could have been written before that occurred or afterwards as if to tell the Southern one, it is not just "them" that is in trouble, but all people called to be God's witnesses!
 - c) If one travels to Israel today, the city of "Samaria" is essentially a big pile of dirt and rocks. It has been excavated, but my point is the fate of that city happened pretty much as Micah described it here in Verse 6. When the Assyrians conquered the Northern Israel Kingdom, the capital city (Samaria) was literally reduced to rubble. The point is that city which was up on a hill was left barren pretty much as Micah described it here in Verse 6.
 - d) To refer to a city as "a place for planting vineyards" is essentially saying, that city was so completely destroyed, it looks like farmland at this point. The reference to putting stones there was meant to add insult to injury. It's essentially saying all the buildings there were destroyed and thrown off the hill like discarded rocks.
 - e) The point is Micah's describing destruction so thorough, no one would recognize it was ever a city in the first place. Based on what I've seen millenniums later, it appears that is the case of that city. No building structures exist in the ruins of Samaria today.
10. Verse 7: All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used."
- a) Speaking of upcoming destruction, Micah gets specific in these verses. Israel was guilty of idols and temples to idols. Prostitution was used to pay for these idols.

- b) Before I go any further, just the thought of living in Israel and there were statues and even temples to other gods sounds bad enough. Then prostitution was used to pay for this is a pretty-good evidence for His judgment coming down hard back then.
 - c) This is a good time to pause and ask, "OK, so a long time ago the Israelites were guilty of some things that would tick God off. What does any of this have to do with us? First it is not a judgment of any of our lives before we were believers. Paul makes it clear that many Christians come from "less than stellar" backgrounds before giving their lives to Jesus as a simple illustration. Remember the judgment issue has to do with our witness as believers. OK you may say again, I don't worship idols and I haven't paid for any prostitutes. What does any of this have to me? The issue isn't the specifics, the issue is God expects us to be a good witness for Him. My second introduction question was what have we done with the knowledge that Jesus is God? I am convinced we're rewarded in heaven on that issue. What I'm saying is when we read about God judging Israel way back then as they turned to idols, the question all of us (myself included) have to ask is, "Is there anything keeping me from being a better witness for Jesus?" Yes that's convicting, but that's the underlying point here in this verse.
 - d) OK enough conviction for Verse 7, let's move on and take a look at Verse 8.
11. Verse 8: Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl.
- a) Notice Micah's attitude here. It's not "Wow, are all of you in big trouble, I'd hate to be in your shoes". Micah realizes that group judgment affects him as well. Micah realizes that if God slams His fist down hard on Israel, he'll suffer just as much as anybody there.
 - b) Instead, Micah announces he's going to walk around barefoot and naked. (No one said to be a profit of God is easy work!) The point is Micah cares for his fellow Israelites and he's willing to do whatever it takes to get his audience to be a living witness for Him.
 - c) It kind of makes one wonder, what does it take to get people to change? We all know that none of us change easily. For example, I rarely argue politics with people simply because I know people are set in their ways. When it comes to discussing Christianity, it's best just to give people something to think about. It's about planting an idea in their head that they may have never thought of before. Too many Christians waste their time trying to close a deal in the first minute. The better option is to bring up a challenge to a belief one already has so people have to think about their views a little more based on their lifestyle choice.
 - d) My point is to realize, "We don't have to weep and wail and go around naked" in order to get a person to turn to God. Sometimes it's just "food for thought" that works best. There are a lot of great apologetic ministries that train on that subject. Personally, I am a big fan of a ministry called "Stand to Reason". They have lots of podcasts on the topics of being a good witness for Jesus and responding to arguments, simply by giving people something to think about. OK then, time for Verse 9:
12. Verse 9: For her wound is incurable; it has come to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself.
- a) When Micah wrote this, the Northern Kingdom was in big trouble. However, Micah was in the Southern Kingdom. To paraphrase Micah, "Hey, it's not just up north where we are seeing Israelites turn from God. It is just as bad in the Southern Kingdom (called Judah). It is even an issue in Jerusalem as well. For a good cross-reference on this, Ezekiel 8 tells some of the sins committed in the Temple itself before its destruction. My point is simply that the idolatry in Israel wasn't just in the Northern Kingdom it was "everywhere".
 - b) OK then. We Christians don't even have a central temple. Think of it as the activity of us Christians. It can be secret sins. It can be the way we treat other Christians. It is any type of activity where one could say we're not a good witness for God right now. So does this mean I have to be perfect all the time? Of course not, but we are always "on the clock" for Jesus so it means we have to consider our behavior at all times, period!

13. Verse 10: Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all. In Beth Ophrah roll in the dust.
- a) Gath was one of the cities of the Philistines, an enemy of the Jewish people. Micah gives a warning here, "Don't give your enemies an excuse to hate you even more!"
 - b) From the second half of Verse 10, all the way to Verse 15, Micah is going to speak in puns. I'm not talking about funny comments. It's the idea of a word "sounding" like another one in order to make a point. For example "Beth Ophrah" means city of dust. Therefore this is a "pun" to say that the "dirty city is rolling in the dirt".
 - c) Let me list those verses and then I'll talk about them.
14. Verse 11: Pass on in nakedness and shame, you who live in Shaphir. Those who live in Zaanan will not come out. Beth Ezel is in mourning; its protection is taken from you. ¹² Those who live in Maroth writhe in pain, waiting for relief, because disaster has come from the LORD, even to the gate of Jerusalem. ¹³ You who live in Lachish, harness the team to the chariot. You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you. ¹⁴ Therefore you will give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath. The town of Aczib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. ¹⁵ I will bring a conqueror against you who live in Mareshah. He who is the glory of Israel will come to Adullam.
- a) With that said, let me put your mind at ease. I'm pretty positive when we get to heaven, it won't be a memory test to recall all of these places listed in Verses 10-15. God's not going to say, "OK, now for the bonus round, name five of the towns listed in Micah 1 and tell me the meaning of those names and the pun used with those names".
 - b) I'm debating whether or not to go through them quickly or just simply say Micah lists all of them to make a point about how God's reacting to how these places in Israel acted as a "failed witness for God".
 - c) I'll make it easy. For a "bonus" for today's lesson, if you read it in the Amplified Version of the bible, it explains all of these places, the meaning of the name and in most cases the pun that ties to the description of that town. It's available for free on line by googling the phrase Micah 1 Amplified Bible.
 - d) Notice the negative attitude about all these places. In every one of these places, Micah is condemning all of them as if to say, "Israel's going down all over the place, deal with it."
 - e) Next, notice there is a lack of "why" in all of these. We get the name puns and the fact it's a list of condemnation, but no reasons are given for that condemnation. Again, we're still in Chapter 1, and what is the specific sin issues are listed elsewhere in the book.
 - f) If I had to describe all of this in one word, it would be "pain". It'd be like asking God what do you have in store for our future, and the answer is pain! Keep in mind the issue's over being a witness for God. Failure to be that witness is where the pain comes in! Does that mean every time something goes wrong, it's because we as a group (be it a church or our community of believers) failed to be the type of witness God wants us to be? Don't know. I do know when things go wrong in my life, the first thing I do is take inventory to see if I have anything to confess as sin and do my best to turn from it. Sometimes God allows us to go through things to strengthen our faith and trust Him through the pain. I know of a woman suffering from a horrid disease and she said she chooses to have joy through all of it in spite of what she's dealing with. My point is not all pain is "sin related", but doing an inventory is still a good thing to do when it comes around.
 - g) OK then, back to the Israelites. Notice a bit of progression in these verses. The first three simply mention the suffering. By Verse 14 the condemnation is about people turning from helping their country to actually fighting against it. It's not like Micah just picked a bunch of cities at random and played, "Let's see how many puns I can make out of city names".
 - i) Micah wanted to get the point across that all of Israel will suffer because the entire nation has turned against God. That's the point here.
 - ii) That leads to the question, "When is it too late for us?" Only God knows when it is so. Our clues is our behavior both individually and collectively as believers.

- h) Finally, notice there's a glimmer of hope in the last part of Verse 15. It says, "He who is the glory of Israel will come to Adullam." The short version of this town is it is a place of ruin and it wasn't uncovered until fairly recent times. The "hope" is the "Glory of Israel" would be a title of the Messiah. This is Micah's way of saying that despite all the destruction that is about to happen, the Messiah (a title for Jesus) is still going to come here despite the fact this place will be in ruins. If you've studied other prophetic books, you'd probably realize by now that the prophets like that pattern: Bad news, more bad news, but good news will come one day as God will win in the end.
- i) This is God's way of saying, despite the fact none of us have lived as He desired, a promise of hope is still there. God's going to complete His plan to have Jesus rule over the world whether we blow it or not. Our job is to lead people to Him and to help people grow in faith in Him until the "good news" occurs. Even if we will not be a witness to it happening here and now, we're still a part of God's plan if we do choose to be used by Him to make a difference for Him. That's the purpose of life in one thought. Meanwhile, I've got one more verse in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 to crank out before I call it a day, so let's get back to it.
15. Verse 16: Shave your heads in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourselves as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile.
- a) First, this verse is not a call for Christians to shave our heads. That act was a way to show mourning over destruction. Remember that Micah wrote this shortly before the time that the Northern Kingdom went into captivity and less than a hundred years before the South suffered the same fate. As far as Micah and God were concerned, this is a "done deal" as it is definitely going to happen. Yes God can relent as we read in Jonah, but since the nation refuses to change their ways, let's just say they were in big trouble.
- b) OK then, let me modernize it. If we feel our country is going down the wrong path, what can do? We can go on the internet and rant and rave to our friends. We could wear a big sandwich board saying, "repent or else". I've always held the view that it is not our job to fix the world. Our job is to be a witness to it. Yes there are many good Christians who are in politics who work in that service. The point is to find a way to use the talents and gifts that God gives you and me, and find a way to use what one enjoys doing in His service.
16. At this point we're moving on to Chapter 2. A quick "half-time" note about these two chapters. I noticed that Chapter 1 focuses on judgment on how we've offended God, while Chapter 2 focuses on how we've sinned against other believers. Chapter 3 then changes themes, but we'll get to that in the next lesson. I just wanted to pause here to get you to notice that the text changes from sins against God Himself (like idolatry) to sins against fellow people (like theft). An underlying point here is that God cares about people and when we hurt others, we're offending God as well! With that said, halftime is over, and it's time to take on Chapter 2.
17. Chapter 2, Verse 1: Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.
- a) Well, Micah doesn't wait long to start on the conviction road! He starts by saying there are some who plot evil at home and then have the means to carry it out. A professional thief would often "case a joint" or study the right situation before stealing something. It's hard to stop such professionals. Keep in mind that Micah is lecturing to believers here! He is saying among those called to be a witness for God, some have sunk so low, that the main thing on their mind is how can I steal from other people and get away with it? Most of us are painfully aware of powerful people who get away with stuff because they can. All of us in effect suffer because of such people who take advantage of others.
18. Verse 2: They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.
- a) Verse 2 is simply an example of Verse 1. There is a term used in politics today called "Pay for play". It's the idea that if you bribe the right politician, you can get what you want.

- b) There's a classical biblical expression called, "There's nothing new under the sun". All that means is there's nothing original in the world today as the same sins that exist today were a part of the world since it's beginning. For example, many years before Micah, there was a king in the Northern Kingdom who had an innocent man put to death just because that king wanted that man's land. That story is in 1st Kings Chapter 21. Just as we can read of biblical accounts of Israelites planning to steal in advance, so that is still an issue today.
 - c) A question to ponder is "Why would someone think that way?" It's one thing if one needs financial help for example and asks others for that help. It is another to plan evil and then go act it out. The problem with wealth is "one is never satisfied with what one has and is trying to get more". As most of us know, the problem with "king of the hill" is someone is always trying to knock one off that hill! Anyway, Verse 2 exists today, and often our only comfort comes from knowing God's aware of those considering and executing the crimes.
19. Verse 3: Therefore, the LORD says: "I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity.
- a) Let's say we live in a world with corrupt political leaders. Why doesn't God "slam His fist" on them today as He did back in Israel so long ago? For starters, we may be in the reach of that "fist" if it happened that way. We all know there are lots of people get away with lots of stuff and all we can do is suffer through it. Yes, we should do what we can in society to correct the wrongs of this world. Remember God will demand an account of how we have lived and how people have ruled over others.
 - b) So if God's "fist came down hard" on Israel back then, why can't we pray for Him for it to happen again today? We can and He has that right. For all we know, He may be judging our nation today in ways that we may only see in hindsight. The danger again, is we may be "in the range of His fist" (my running joke of the lesson) and He's holding off judgment in order for more people to be one of His until that judgment comes down.
 - c) Anyway, back in Micah's day, this judgment didn't happen until after Micah along with a few others like Isaiah "said their peace". Think of those prophets as giving them a last call before things went horrible! That in effect is what us Christians have been called to do for the last 2,000 years: "Preach that judgment is coming, we can't avoid it, we can't get out of the game and our only hope is our trust in Jesus as full payment of our sins!" That's what Micah was called to do and in our ways, that's what we've been called to do as well.
20. Verse 4: In that day men will ridicule you; they will taunt you with this mournful song: `We are utterly ruined; my people's possession is divided up. He takes it from me! He assigns our fields to traitors.' "
- a) To paraphrase, "A day is coming when an enemy will to steal and divide up all we've got for themselves and there's nothing we can do to stop it." Imagine a foreign army invading our land and taking all they can." War's all about power and control. That fact is as old as our existence on this planet. Micah's saying that type of destruction is coming to our land and there is nothing we can do to stop it!
 - b) Remember all the theft that was described in the previous few verses, well God's gotten to a point where He's saying, "Enough is enough, you're beyond the point of help and now it is judgment time!" So when is that time coming to our land? We never know. Jesus said only the Father knows the time of Jesus Second Coming and that time is fixed by Him, so we just have to accept it, whenever it comes. In the meantime, we're to do what God calls us to do be a witness for Him and warn people of that judgment and teach others how we can avoid it by trusting in Jesus before it all begins! Yes I'm getting into the fundamentals, but that in effect is what Micah is doing as well in these verses.
 - c) Speaking of Micah, time to get back to him.
21. Verse 5: Therefore you will have no one in the assembly of the LORD to divide the land by lot.
- a) If there is one thing I've learned from studying my bible, is the prophets liked to use many illustrations that people could relate to. Verse 5 is one of them.

- b) The simple point is the Israelites knew that when they first came into that land, the tribes did divide-up that land "by lot". The term "by lot" is like "shooting dice" to decide which tribe gets which piece of land. To borrow another old saying, "Don't mess with God as the dice are loaded!" Anyway, the Israelites knew they lived in territories divided by lot. Micah is saying when the conquerors come, there will be no Israelites there to be a part of that dividing process. That literally came true when the Assyrians conquered the "North" and the Babylonians roughly a century later conquered the "South". All I am saying is the Israelites refused to believe God's prophets and suffered the fate stated by Micah as well as the other prophets preaching at that time!
22. Verse 6: "Do not prophesy," their prophets say. "Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us."
- a) Were there false prophets then as there are today? Of course. How do we tell who is who among the prophets? Easy, which are preaching God's word and which aren't. The other way is to watch what comes true. The office of a true prophet means one has to be perfect 100% of the time when speaking on God's behalf. As much as I love preaching His word, I admit, I'd be nervous about wanting this job. I consider one of the scariest bible verses to be James 3:1. It effectively reads, "Let not many of you be teachers (of His word) as teachers will receive a harsher judgment". That means if one is called to preach God's word, we'll be held accountable to preach it accurately. That is why I work so hard to prepare as I get the idea of my accountability. It also helps me avoid being a false teacher!
- b) All of that leads me back to Verse 6. Here are a bunch of false prophets probably saying to "Go enjoy life, nothing's going to change and all is well!" False prophets always have a "ring of truth" to their message. They can say, "This is the only shot you get at living this life (truth), therefore one should enjoy it as much as possible (truth), but why worry about what's out of our control. They never preach about God's judgment. The lie is that God's judgment will not come. The lie is life will go on forever like it is today and we have got nothing to be concerned about. Ignore what's going on "behind the curtain" and go enjoy your life! Lots of powerful speakers exist today who avoid repentance like the plague!
- c) Another way to recognize a false prophet is the crowd they draw. Unfortunately, more are drawn to the "popular" than the true prophet of God. I'm not talking about myself. I am talking about those who preach, "You're all good people, you don't need a god to tell you how to live your life. You don't have to fear a judgment day!" That type of message that says in effect, "Enjoy your life, go party, and don't fear God" is always going to be more popular than hearing the truth about God. Speaking of which, let's get back to Micah.
23. Verse 7: Should it be said, O house of Jacob: "Is the Spirit of the LORD angry? Does he do such things?" "Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright?"
- a) Let me quickly describe the idea of God being angry. I figured if God is perfect, then He can't learn anything. To me, I've always thought of God as being perfect in love, perfect in judgment and even perfect in His anger at sin. God's all those things at the same time. The point here is when judgment came on Israel, from their perspective, they are seeing God's judgment come down hard, so from that perspective, we're seeing anger from God as Micah is predicting.
- b) I have to admit, this verse was a little confusing, so I checked a few others. The essential idea here is Micah is saying, "I'm not wasting my life preaching what God told me to say for no good reason. If you (plural) do what is right, God won't be angry. If you continue to act the way you are, judgment is coming hard and soon!"
- c) If you've been with me through some of the other minor prophet books, the North Israel Kingdom was pretty much guilty of completely turning from God at this time. They were enjoying a time of prosperity as their king and army conquered some surrounding towns. Assyria was weak at that moment. However, they took their sense of self-prosperity as a sign that God's happy with them for the moment, even though they ignored Him.

- i) In the Southern Kingdom, things weren't much better. For the most part, those Israelites in the South had turned away from worshipping God. King Hezekiah who was the last king listed during the time of Micah did lead some reforms. I'm convinced that's one reason God held off judgment in the South for awhile. What all means is Micah's saying, "let's all get our act together before the hammer comes down around here and hard!"
 - d) With that said, let me bring this to present day. I assume most my readers are Christians, and I assume most of us are trying to make a difference for Jesus. I'm not saying we have to walk around wearing the sandwich boards with "Repent or else". I am saying that God expects us to use our lives as a witness for Him and just as God came down hard on those people so long ago, is a reminder that in His own way, He can come down just as hard on us if we fail to live as He desires.
 - e) OK then, six more verses to go in this lesson.
24. Verse 8: Lately my people have risen up like an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle. ⁹ You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever.
- a) Remember how I said Chapter 1 focuses on sins against God while Chapter 2 focuses on a short list of sins against other people? Verses 8-9 give some examples. Before I discuss it, I need you to realize these sins are not better or worse than other ones. They are simply a few examples of how the residents of Israel were stealing from others.
 - b) Let me explain that a little better: I've never held the view that all sins are equal. Yes, I'm convinced that none of us are perfect and we need a perfect God to pay the complete price for our sins. Still, I don't consider for example a parking ticket to be as sinful as murder. I always like to show Christians who think all sins are equal this verse: "Therefore the one who handed me (Jesus) over to you is guilty of a greater sin." (John 19:11b, NIV). All I'm saying is God considers some sins worse than others. Does that mean there are different levels of hell? Don't know and I don't want to visit there to find out. I do know that the only unforgivable sin is a lifetime denial that Jesus is God. All others can be forgiven. (I base that on Mark 3:28). The reason I'm getting into all that here, is these two verses are on the issue of some particular sins. I don't want you to think "That's all there is". They are simply examples of how the Israelites were "ticking God off" at that moment.
 - c) The "taking of the rich robe" is about stealing from fellow Israelites. The idea of "driving the women from their pleasant homes" is probably a reference to taking the homes away from widows. Whatever the crimes were, the problem is nobody was standing up to the injustice of it all and now "God's putting His foot down."
 - d) OK you may say. People get away with stuff all the time. As I love to preach, this world would be a very unfair place to live if there is no eternal judgment. I'm also a believer in law and order and it's just as much a Christian duty to get involved when appropriate to bring people to justice as it is be loving. I'm not saying "Vigilante". I'm saying we should report a crime if we know of one. That is being a good witness as much as any loving act we may think of. That's my sole point here.
 - e) Before I move on, I want to emphasize that the whole book of Micah isn't this tough. God is laying out his case in the first few chapters, before we get to some other positive things to say about the Messiah (Jesus) coming in the world. In the meantime, let's keep rolling.
25. Verse 10: Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy.
- a) Remember how I said the false prophets were essentially saying, "All is well, judgment is not coming?" Here is Micah's response, get out while you've got the chance! Where we're living is about to be ruined. The land of Israel is "beyond hope" at this point, because as a group, you're not living as I desire. I (God) wish I didn't have to go to this extreme, but it is necessary because you are ignoring Me."

- b) I'm reminded about how Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed after He rose from the dead. An interesting bit of history is the Christians living in Jerusalem when this occurred took Jesus words to heart. The first century historian Josephus tells us how some Christians escaped that judgment when the Roman army surrounded that city. My point is that there is benefit from listening to God even right before it is too late.
 - c) So are you saying God's going to destroy our cities? No this is a specific judgment against a specific place in time. Yes, God can judge any city or say any church at any time. I'd say most of us adults know of churches or ministries that have died off once people there did turn from His word to do whatever they felt like.
 - d) Remember that Micah is preaching to believers who were ignoring God. It's a reminder to us to never give up on the "lost" as we don't know who will turn back to God before we'll see "His fist" come down hard on some place.
26. Verse 11: If a liar and deceiver comes and says, 'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,' he would be just the prophet for this people!
- a) If a prophet comes along and says, "I see plenty of liquor in your future, go enjoy life as it is the only chance you get at it", you know you're listening to a false prophet. Remember that false teachers don't wear badges saying, "Hey, I'm a false teacher, listen to me." They just preach what they believe is right. Our job as Christians is to compare what they say to God's word and judge it that way.
 - b) Micah is saying there are (and always will be) popular false teachers around who will tell people what they want to hear. A key word is "repent". If you see a teacher avoiding that word, that's a good sign you're listening to someone, "barking up the wrong tree".
27. Verse 12: "I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.
- a) The good news of Micah is that the whole lesson is not all bad news. We get a glimmer of hope in the last two verses. To paraphrase Micah, "Yes you're all doomed as God's going to carry out His plan to destroy this place. However, it's not "the" end. He will bring back a remnant of the Israelites and once again that land with "thrive" with them.
 - b) A quick history lesson. When the Babylonians formed their own empire over the Middle East at that time, they inherited the Assyrian Empire and all their captives. After that, the Persians conquered the Babylonians and among the things the Persians did, was allow the Israelites to return to that land. As I love to state, God likes to work in patterns. Israel did get destroyed again by the Romans and that land was under foreign control for thousands of years. Israel wasn't an independent country until 1948. Other than a brief period when they broke off from the Greeks. Israel was a part of empires for thousands of years.
 - c) My point here is essentially the same as Micah's: Despite the upcoming destruction, it isn't "the end" of God using Israel as a unique entity. The point for you and me is that although we can lose our witness for Jesus, it's not "the end" for the church as He will still carry out His will for the church until Jesus returns period. Therefore, my point here is that we need to "Get busy for Jesus or get out of the way" as our own doom is coming if we fail to do as He desires. On that scary thought, one more verse to cover:
28. Verse 13: One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."
- a) Considering how negative this whole lesson has been, it's nice to end it on a positive note. Remember the last verse talked about despite all the horrid things that will happen to the residents of Israel, the last two verses essentially say, "it's not over". As I love to preach, I am still convinced God's got a purpose for Israel as a nation. That's what the last 2 verses of the chapter end on a positive note. While Verse 12 tells us that God will bring them to the land again, Verse 13 says who will lead the charge.
 - b) The short version is Verse 13 is talking about the Messiah Himself.

- c) It's important to discuss modern Israel in relation to these verses. When Israel defeated the surrounding Muslim nations in 1967, they took back the old city of Jerusalem. That's the first time the Jewish flag has flown there if memory is correct since Roman times. I'm not saying that when the Israel army entered that city, it was the literal fulfillment of this verse here in Micah. I'm saying it's a "pattern" of things to come. Let me explain.
 - d) One of the reasons the modern nation of Israel set up a presidency and a congress, is they know that any future king has to be "The" King, which the Israelites call the Messiah and we Christians call Jesus Second Coming.
 - e) So does that mean the Israelites will lose Jerusalem again so "the king" will take it over? I have read a few scholars who argue that. My view is that a part of all that Revelation "big war" stuff means more wars in the Middle East (gee, what's new?) and that ends with the Messiah coming to claim that city as His own. The "Revelation Stuff" will have wars over Jerusalem and Israel and Jesus "wins" by taking over the city once and forever!
 - f) One last thing before I wrap it up for a week. If you know you're bible fairly well, you'd know that there are lots of titles associated with the Messiah. One title you may not have heard of is "the wall breaker". This verse describes someone who leads the Israelites back into that city and some refer to Jesus as the "wall breaker". So does Jesus just go through it as the king, or does he actually break his way in? The text implies he leads Israelites to that gate, into that city. I'm convinced this is "end time" stuff, so just keep that in mind.
29. OK, let's sum this up and call it a week. Most of these verses focus on how Israel was committing sin both against God and against their fellow Israelites. It's not a list of "If you just commit any of these sins, you're toast!" The point is to say we're saved for a purpose, to be His witness to a lost and dying world. The final verses about the Messiah coming are to remind us, "no matter if we blow it, God's going to go through with His plans and keep His unconditional promise that Israel as a land is going to go to them despite how they've blown it historically. It is also a reminder for us Christians that even if we blow our witness for Him, His plan to redeem us is unconditional. Therefore my concluding thought is don't waste the opportunities God's given us to be a witness for Him. Our salvation isn't the issue, but our eternal rewards are, as well as the greatest way to experience joy in this life. On that happy note, I'll close in prayer.
30. Let's pray: Father, help us to remember that You created us for a purpose: It is to glorify You by how we live our lives! Give us opportunities to be a witness for You and guide as we use them to make that difference for You. Help us to realize it is only by Your power and prayer that people's hearts can change. Give us the wisdom to be the type of witness You want us to be. Guide as we do use our time and our resources for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.