

Biblical Justice

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Slide2 This Weekend:

II. Slide3 Intro: Biblical Justice

A. We've seen the headlines when *a plane goes down*. Now imagine waking up this morning to the headlines, *100 Jetliners crash killing 26,500. Then the next day the same thing! It did. It does!*

1. Over 26,500 **children** died today of **preventable causes related to their poverty**. [10 mill in the course of a year]
2. We have the **awareness**, the **access**, & the **ability** to stop it.
3. Why haven't we done something about it? Because its not our kids??? They're somebody else's. How do we make it *personal* for us?
4. **Prayer: Let our hearts be broken** for the things that **break Gods heart**.

B. Slide4a 3 Messages in Micah: (each intro's by "*Hear*") The Coming Judgment (1,2). The Future Kingdom (3-5). God's Invitation to *Turn to the Lord* (6,7).

1. Slide4b Who is a *Holy* God like Yahweh, Awesome in Judgment?
2. Who is a *Righteous* God like You, Demanding and Implementing Justice?
3. Who is a *Forgiving* God like You, Compassionate in Loyal Love?

C. Ch.3 starts with the 2nd "*Hear*", or 2nd message.

1. This is directed at the their **leaders**, because of their **sin**. They disobeyed God & eventually had to be judged.
2. He used 3 pictures to describe their **sin**: *Hunters, Shepherds, & Builders*.

D. Why is this chapter important?

1. To make us **more sensitive to injustice** around us and teach us to *practice justice* and *kindness* towards others.

2. To expose religious hypocrisy.

E. **Micah** emphasizes **God's undeserved grace**, and keeps repeating the fact that *God's salvation, His initiative in saving us, is unstoppable.*

1. **Slide5** Micah 7:18 **Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love.**

F. The minor prophets largely convey a message of God's judgment. *In Micah's case the message of judgment was heeded, repentance followed, and the disaster was postponed for a century.*

1. In coming to **Micah** we should be encouraged to learn that **one man did make a difference.**

2. Micah preached for somewhere between 16-25 years without succeeding. Finally there was an awakening. *Never give up!*

III. **Slide6a HUNTERS (1-4) Read**

A. **They hate good and love evil (1).**

1. **Slide6b** African Proverb, **Corn can't expect justice from a court composed of chickens.**

B. **They devour the sheep (2-5).**

C. **The image is of a hunter cleaning his kill and making a pot of stew out of it.** The cruel oppression of the rulers against their own people is likened to cannibalism.

1. **Instead of caring for the people, the leaders treated them like animals & devoured them.**

D. (4) **Hide His face** - The day would come when they would cry out to God, **but** He would not answer them.

IV. **Slide7 SHEPHERDS (5-7) Read**

- A. Instead of **guiding** the flock in **God's paths**, they **led them astray** w/their message of **false peace**. Their deception would be followed by **darkness**, and they would have **no hope**.
- B. (5) **The prophets** - are not properly using their prophetic office.
1. The prophetic office was formalized in Deut 18:15-22.
 2. This foundational passage revealed that God Himself would raise up individuals who would speak His words to His people.
 3. The title **prophet** denotes a *spokesperson*. A more complete definition is "*one sent by God to announce His Word.*"
- C. **Lead my people astray** - The image is that of sheep, who naturally follow their shepherd.
1. **These prophets** are to be **contrasted** with **Yahweh** who leads His people (see Micah 2:13) (beg & end).
- D. **Cry peace** - **for those** who **paid them**, the false prophets prophesied **peace and prosperity**; **for those** who **withheld support**, they prophesied **chaos and calamity**.
- E. (6) **without vision** - Numb.12:6 confirms that God typically revealed Himself to prophets through **dreams and visions**. [w/o a vision the people _____ (perish)]
1. Daniel, Amos, and Zechariah are examples of prophets who were given a series of divine messages by means of visions.
- F. (7) **Seers** - A fuller definition of the Hebrew term here is *one who is given a message in a vision*.

V. Slide8 **BUILDERS (8-12)** *Read*

- A. Instead of building the city on **the law of the Lord**, they **broke the law** and **built with bloodshed**. **Why?** Because they wanted to *get more money*. **But** everything they built would be **torn down**, and their **money** would be **useless** to them.
- B. **A true leader protects** the people, **guides** them in God's will, and **serves** without thought of personal gain.
- C. **They despise justice** (8,9).

- D. (8) This verse sharply *contrasts* Micah, the true prophet, with the false prophets of Micah 3:5-7. [note, justice, another contrast]
- E. (9) *Detest justice* - Micah is filled with *mighty justice* (8) while they *abhor justice*.
- F. They *make crooked all that is straight* - the wicked leaders pervert the way of righteousness.
- G. *They shed innocent blood* (10). *They accept bribes* (11).
- H. *Give judgment for a bribe* - Making judgments based on money is the *opposite* of true justice.
- I. *Its priests teach for a price* - the priests were responsible for teaching the Law to all of Israel. The people were to support them with tithes. *The price mentioned here is in addition to the required tithe*.
- J. *No disaster shall come upon us* - refers to the sin of presumption. [*i.e.* disaster won't come, this is the home of Yahweh]
- K. (12) *A heap of ruins* - the fate of *Jerusalem* is the same as that of *Samaria* (1:6).
 1. This prophecy was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in **586 bc** at the hands of the Babylonians.
- L. *A wooded height* - if trees are growing on Mount Zion, then Jerusalem has been destroyed and left in ruins.

VI. Slide9 JUSTICE

- A. **Every human** is born with an *innate passion for justice*, just give 1 child *4 cookies* & the other child *3 cookies* and sit back and watch.
 1. Life is **not fair** *but* it can and should be **just**.
 2. **Biblical Justice** is **not about** starting/joining a movement, **but promoting** *God's agenda*.
- B. **God is just & loves justice** and thus hates *injustice* (any abuse of power).
- C. **Slide10a Justice is** basically *Care for the Vulnerable* [rec Tim Keller book, *Generous Justice*]
 1. It's treating people **equitably**, by giving people what they are **due**.
Punishment to the evil doers, or protection or care to the vulnerable.

And living a life of **right relationships w/God & w/our fellow man.**

[combo **justice/righteousness**] (placed together 50 x's in Scripture)

2. **Justice is birthed in the character of God & comes from the heart of God.**¹

a) **Actually**, the bible talks about **justice** twice as much as it does **love**.

D. **And why does God hate injustice so much? because He loves the victims of injustice so much. He can't even sit still when He sees it.**

1. Ps.12:5 I have **seen violence** done to the **helpless**, and I have **heard** the groans of the **poor**. Now **I will rise up to rescue them**, as they have longed for me to do.

E. **God is also a God of Rescue**

1. **Slide10b** Ps.10:17,18 **Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so mere people can no longer terrify them.**

2. God doesn't **just** get **angry** about **injustice** but **does** something about it.

3. **Slide10c** Ps.35:10 **All my bones shall say (i.e. w/my entire being), Lord, who is like You, Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?**

a) **Slide10d** The sin of **injustice** can be **defined as**, *when a stronger person abuses his/her power by taking from a weaker person, what God alone has given the weaker person. God judges this as sin.*

F. **Biblical examples of injustice:**

1. **Cain** stole Abel's life through **murder**. **The Egyptians** stole the Hebrew's liberty, dignity & well-being through **forced slavery**. **King David** stole **Uriah's wife & then Uriah's life**. **Amnon** stole Tamar's **dignity, well-being & personal wholeness** by **raping** her. **King Herod** **stole** the lives of all the boys of Bethlehem 2 years & younger. **The religious leaders in**

¹ Ken Wytsma, Justice Conf LA, 2014

Jerusalem stole the lives of Stephen & other believers through **the abuse of their civil-religious power**.

a) In each of these stories *the weaker person* isn't suffering because of *random unfairness, an uncontrollable act of nature, or a patch of hard life*. Rather, the *weaker person* is suffering because of *the very intentional abuse & oppression of a stronger person*. This is injustice!

G. Ok, so God wants to **rescue** the oppressed, **What's His plan** to do this?

A: He calls US to it.

1. Slide 1a Is. 1:17 *Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.*
 2. Since God is & loves justice, so justice should be *something we are & something we do*. Not, something else we add to our list *but* our very DNA.
 3. If our #1 command is *to love God & love people*, *than my conversion & sanctification has social consequence or it is no conversion at all.*²
 4. *Justice is not a fad, it's not a trend, it's not a political agenda, Justice Matters because justice must be part of our worship of God.*³ Eugene Cho
 5. Justice becomes our **worship in action**. [Justice is **love in public**]
- a) *And it looks like:* The lifting of the **broken**. It's recognizing every human being as created *imago dei*, in the image of God & thus has intrinsic value. It's meeting people's basic needs out of a *gospel-produced compassion*. It's *Advocating for people w/less social power*. *And It's making our community a good place for everyone to live.*

H. Slide 1b *"We do not meet needs because it gives us the chance to share Christ, but because it is part of who Christ is, and if He is in us, it is part of who we are. We are not just sharing a message but reflecting the one who sends it."*

I. Keywords: Justice, peace, Micah.

² Steve Gumaer, Partners R&D, paper on Justice. AD511.512 - Advocacy and Human Rights

³ Eugene Cho, Justice Conf LA, 2014