

No Rest to Those Who Practice Evil

Key Verse: *“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?”*
—Micah 2:7

Selected Scripture:
Micah 2:4-11
oppressing them.—Mic. 2:2,9

THE WORDS OF OUR LESSON serve as a rebuke to the nation of Israel—referred to here as the “house of Jacob”—because they were not behaving in a manner worthy of being called his people. Part of their evil ways included transgressing against the laws for the protection of each man’s real estate and inheritance. (Lev. 25:23-28) They devised plans to take property by violence, destroying the inheritance of families, and

In our Key Verse, Micah bitterly reproves their actions and questions their very standing before God. He asks them if they recognize that God’s spirit has become “straitened,” or short and impatient. He also inquires as to whether they understand that he would “do good” to them if they walked “uprightly,” but they were not doing so. God had fostered Israel as his first born son, but found it necessary to mete out just punishment to them because of their unfaithfulness. They, on the other hand, foolishly thought that they could continue to claim the blessing of the Lord regardless of their conduct. God’s righteousness, however, could not be compromised or watered down.

Although God is unchangeable in his ways, it was not so with his chosen people. Israel, who had promised to obey God's commandments, openly violated them in many ways. Furthermore, they then failed to listen to God's messages of correction and reproof given through his prophets, telling them to cease speaking. For example, God had instructed Amos to "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." When he did so, their response was, "Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac." (Amos 7:15,16) Israel, not God, had changed, and his promises could no longer be rightfully claimed by them. They belong only to those who walk uprightly.

God truly desires that his people, in all ages, walk according to his precepts. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer. 29:11) We are further reminded in Psalm 84:11, "The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." We realize that our Heavenly Father wants his children to be faithful and loyal to him. He will shine upon the pathway of those who trust in him, and will illuminate their hearts, minds, and actions.

Turning again to the second chapter of Micah, verse 10 states, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." With these words God, through the prophet, points out to Israel that they no longer are worthy of abiding in his presence. Hence, they can no longer find rest in him, for such rest is only for those striving to serve him faithfully, and who cease "from his own works." (Heb. 4:5,6,9,10) In the arrangement of God's plan, Israel is a picture of the entire world of mankind. In Christ's coming kingdom of righteousness and peace, any who continue to serve evil and willfully disobey God, will be removed from his presence. Those who serve him and walk uprightly, under the same righteous arrangements, will be blessed with everlasting life. ■