

The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 6: Hear, You Peoples: Judgment Announced

Micah 1:1–2:13

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, these opening chapters of Micah establish two truths. First, God judges His own covenant people, not only the pagan nations, and He judges them for both idolatry (false worship) and injustice (oppression of the vulnerable). These two sins are joined throughout the prophets: a people unfaithful to God in worship become unfaithful to their neighbors in life. Teach that God's holiness is real, His judgment is just, and He is not impressed by religious appearances that mask a corrupt heart and oppressive hands.

Second, the closing promise of a gathered remnant with their King going before them (2:12–13) must be handled rightly. This is not a prediction of a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel. It is the promise of the Messianic gathering fulfilled in Christ, the good Shepherd who gathers His one flock (John 10:11–16) and reigns over His church, the spiritual Israel composed of all who belong to Him by faith (Galatians 3:26–29). Guard the class against a dispensational reading; point them to Christ and the church.

This passage forms the student as well. It calls us to take sin seriously, to grieve over brokenness as God does, to use whatever power we have to bless rather than exploit, to welcome hard truth, and to rejoice that we belong to the flock Christ has gathered. Teach toward honesty, compassion, and gratitude.

Question 1

Student Question:

The book opens with a cosmic summons: "Hear, you peoples, all of you... For behold, the Lord is coming out of his place" to judge (1:2–3). What does it reveal about God that He calls the whole earth to witness, and that He holds His own covenant people accountable rather than excusing them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open with the grandeur and gravity of the summons: "Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you" (1:2). The whole earth is called as witness, and the God who dwells in His holy temple comes out of His place to judge. This is courtroom language on a cosmic scale.

Stress that the defendant is God's own people. The judgment falls on Samaria and Jerusalem, the capitals of His covenant nation, not merely on pagan outsiders. This is sobering: belonging to

God's people is no shield against accountability; if anything, it raises the standard (Amos 3:2). God does not grade His own on a curve.

Connect to the New Testament principle that judgment begins with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). Those who claim to belong to God are precisely those most accountable for how they live. The summons warns against a presumptuous religion that assumes God's favor while ignoring His commands.

Set the tone for the whole book. Micah holds together unflinching judgment and surprising hope. These opening verses are the judgment side, and they are meant to make us take both God's holiness and our own accountability with full seriousness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God is the righteous Judge of all the earth.
- God holds His own covenant people accountable, not just outsiders.
- Belonging to God's people raises the standard rather than removing it (Amos 3:2).
- Judgment begins with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17).
- Presumptuous religion assumes God's favor while ignoring His commands.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God call the whole earth to witness His case against His people?
- Why is it sobering that judgment falls on God's own people first?
- How can belonging to God's people tempt us toward presumption?

Question 2

Student Question:

Micah declares that the Lord comes down and "the mountains will melt under him" (1:4) at the revelation of His holiness. When you consider the holiness of God before whom even mountains melt, how does that shape the way you approach Him and the way you regard your own sin?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question draws on the theophany of verse 4: when the Lord comes down, "the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire." The most solid, permanent things in creation cannot stand before the holiness of God. Micah wants us to feel the weight of who God is.

Teach the holiness of God as the proper backdrop for understanding sin. We minimize sin only because we have first minimized God. When we glimpse a holiness before which mountains melt, our casual attitude toward our own sin becomes impossible to maintain.

Help the class translate this into reverence rather than mere fear. The right response to God's holiness is not cringing terror but humble awe, the posture of Isaiah who cried "Woe is me" in God's presence (Isaiah 6:5), and then received cleansing. Holiness exposes us, but for the penitent it leads to grace.

Apply it to worship and daily life. A recovered sense of God's holiness reshapes how we pray, how we gather to worship, and how seriously we treat the sins we have learned to excuse. Familiarity with God should never curdle into casualness about Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's holiness is so great that creation itself cannot stand before it.
- We minimize sin only after we have minimized God.
- The right response to holiness is humble awe, not casualness.
- Holiness exposes the sinner but leads the penitent to grace (Isaiah 6:5-7).
- A recovered sense of God's holiness reshapes worship and life.

Discussion Prompts

- How does a clear view of God's holiness change the way you see your own sin?
- What is the difference between cringing fear and humble awe before God?
- How might recovering reverence reshape your worship and daily life?

Question 3

Student Question:

God identifies the root of the judgment as idolatry: the "high places" and carved images in which Israel trusted (1:5-7). What forms do idols take in our own culture, and why does God treat the worship of false gods as such a fundamental betrayal?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 5-7 name the root of the judgment: idolatry. The "high places" and carved images in which Israel trusted were the heart of their unfaithfulness. They had given to created things the trust, devotion, and worship that belong to God alone. Idolatry is spiritual adultery, a betrayal of the covenant relationship.

Teach idolatry in its modern forms. Few in the class bow to carved statues, but the human heart is, as the Reformers said, a factory of idols. Anything we trust for security, meaning, and identity in place of God functions as an idol: money, success, romance, nation, comfort, reputation. Idolatry is alive and well; it has just changed costumes.

Explain why God treats it as so fundamental. Idolatry is the root from which other sins grow. When we worship the wrong thing, we will inevitably live the wrong way; Micah moves directly

from false worship (chapter 1) to social injustice (chapter 2) because the two are connected. Disordered worship produces disordered lives.

Point to the positive cure. The answer to idolatry is not merely smashing idols but worshiping the true God wholeheartedly. As Chalmers said, the only thing that expels an old love is a new and greater one; the heart captivated by God is freed from its idols.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Idolatry is giving created things the worship due to God alone.
- The human heart readily manufactures idols in every age.
- Modern idols include money, success, comfort, and reputation.
- Disordered worship produces disordered living.
- The cure for idolatry is wholehearted worship of the true God.

Discussion Prompts

- What forms do idols take in our culture and in our own hearts?
- Why does idolatry lie at the root of so many other sins?
- How does worshiping the true God free us from our idols?

Question 4

Student Question:

Micah is so grieved that he says he will “lament and wail” and go “stripped and naked” (1:8) over his people’s sin. When was the last time someone else’s sin, or the brokenness of the world, actually grieved you rather than merely annoyed or entertained you? What would it look like to share God’s grief?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question draws on Micah’s visceral grief in verse 8: “For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked.” The prophet does not announce judgment with cold detachment or grim satisfaction; he is broken over his people’s sin. His heart aligns with God’s own grief.

Help the class examine their emotional response to sin and brokenness. We can become numb, treating the world’s evil as background noise, or worse, as entertainment to be consumed in headlines and dramas. Micah models a heart that still grieves over what grieves God.

Distinguish godly grief from mere outrage or anxiety. The world offers plenty of anger and despair about its brokenness. Micah’s lament is different: it is grief shaped by love, the sorrow of one who longs for his people to be made right with God. This is closer to how Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).

Move toward a tender heart. Pray that God would replace numbness and cynicism with a heart that breaks over what breaks His, and that this grief would move us toward intercession and compassion rather than mere complaint.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Micah grieves over sin rather than announcing judgment with detachment.
- We are prone to numbness or even entertainment toward the world's brokenness.
- Godly grief is sorrow shaped by love, not mere outrage.
- Jesus Himself wept over a city's sin (Luke 19:41).
- A tender heart grieves what grieves God and moves toward compassion.

Discussion Prompts

- When did sin or brokenness last actually grieve you rather than annoy or entertain you?
- How does godly grief differ from mere outrage or anxiety?
- How might shared grief move us toward intercession and compassion?

Question 5

Student Question:

In 2:1–2, God condemns those who “devise wickedness” on their beds and then seize fields and houses because “it is in the power of their hand.” What does this teach us about how God views the misuse of power and the oppression of the vulnerable, even when it is technically legal?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 2 turns from idolatry to injustice, and verses 1–2 are chilling in their detail: “Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away.” These are premeditated, calculated sins against the vulnerable.

Teach how God views the misuse of power. The land-grabbers were likely operating within the technical bounds of law, manipulating debts and courts to dispossess poor families of the ancestral land God had given them. God sees through legality to justice. “Because it is in the power of their hand” is the only justification they need, and God condemns exactly that reasoning.

Connect to the consistent prophetic witness that God defends the vulnerable: the widow, the orphan, the poor, the foreigner (Isaiah 1:17; Amos 5:11–12). True faith in God is never indifferent to how the powerful treat the powerless. Worship and justice are inseparable in the prophets.

Apply it carefully and without partisanship. The point is timeless and personal: wherever we have power over others, God watches how we use it. The question is not merely what we can legally do, but what is just and loving toward those who cannot defend themselves.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God condemns premeditated, calculated sin against the vulnerable.
- God sees through technical legality to true justice.
- “Because we can” is never sufficient justification before God.
- God consistently defends the widow, orphan, poor, and foreigner.
- Worship of God and justice toward neighbor are inseparable.

Discussion Prompts

- What does this passage teach about how God views the misuse of power?
- Why is something being legal not the same as it being just before God?
- How does God’s defense of the vulnerable shape our responsibilities?

Question 6

Student Question:

The land-grabbers of Micah’s day used their power simply because they could (2:1). Where do you have power, influence, or advantage over others (at work, at home, in relationships), and how can you make sure you use it to bless rather than to take?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes the land-grabbers’ justification (“because it is in the power of their hand,” 2:1) and turns it on the student. Everyone holds power of some kind: a parent over children, an employer over employees, the strong over the weak, the articulate over the inarticulate, the wealthy over the poor. The question is how we use it.

Help the class identify their spheres of power honestly. We tend to feel powerless and overlook the real influence we have over others in ordinary settings. Naming our power is the first step to stewarding it well.

Teach the biblical pattern of power used to bless. God gives power not for self-advancement but for the good of others; the model is Christ, who held all power yet used it to serve and to give His life (Mark 10:42–45). Greatness in the kingdom is measured by service.

Move toward concrete application. Invite each person to name one relationship where they hold an advantage and one specific way they could use that advantage to bless rather than to take this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Everyone holds power of some kind over others.
- We tend to overlook the real influence we have.
- God gives power for the good of others, not self-advancement.
- Christ used His power to serve and to give His life (Mark 10:42–45).
- Stewarding power well means using advantage to bless, not to take.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you hold power, influence, or advantage over others?
- How does Christ's use of His power reshape how you should use yours?
- What is one way you could use an advantage to bless someone this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

The people did not want to hear Micah's hard words; they said, "Do not preach" and preferred prophets who would promise them wine and strong drink (2:6, 11). Why are people, then and now, so drawn to preachers who tell them only what they want to hear, and what does this reveal about the human heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 6 and 11 expose a culture that silenced uncomfortable truth. The people told the prophets, "Do not preach" (2:6), and Micah notes acidly that if a man came preaching lies about plenty of wine and strong drink, "he would be the preacher for this people!" (2:11). They wanted flattery, not truth.

Teach the perennial temptation to prefer comfortable lies. Paul warned Timothy of a time when people "will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions" (2 Timothy 4:3–4). The human heart often prefers a pleasant falsehood to a painful truth.

Help the class see why this is so dangerous. A people who silence hard truth lose the very thing that could save them. Flattery feels kind but is actually cruel, because it leaves people undisturbed on the road to ruin. The faithful word that wounds is the friend; the flattering word that soothes is the enemy (Proverbs 27:6).

Apply it to how we choose our spiritual influences. We should ask not "who makes me feel good about myself?" but "who tells me the truth I need, even when it is hard?" The mark of maturity is welcoming, not resenting, the word that corrects us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- People often prefer comfortable lies to painful truth.
- Itching ears accumulate teachers who suit their passions (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

- Flattery is cruel because it leaves people undisturbed on the road to ruin.
- Faithful wounds are better than deceitful kisses (Proverbs 27:6).
- Maturity welcomes the word that corrects us.

Discussion Prompts

- Why are people so drawn to preachers who say only what they want to hear?
- Why is flattery actually a form of cruelty?
- How should we choose the spiritual voices we listen to?

Question 8

Student Question:

Micah confronts a culture that silenced uncomfortable truth and rewarded flattery. How open are you, honestly, to hearing hard truth about yourself, whether from Scripture, from godly friends, or from your own conscience? How can you cultivate a teachable heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses the previous one into the student's own heart: how open am I, really, to hard truth about myself? It is easy to condemn Micah's audience for silencing the prophets while doing the same thing in subtler ways in our own lives.

Help the class recognize the defenses we use against correction: defensiveness, rationalizing, avoiding people who tell us the truth, surrounding ourselves only with those who agree. A teachable heart is rarer and more valuable than we like to admit.

Teach the value of correction in Scripture. "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid" (Proverbs 12:1). The wise person actively invites correction, knowing that the friend who wounds faithfully is doing them good. God often speaks to us through the very feedback we are tempted to resent.

Move toward a concrete practice. Encourage each person to invite honest input from a trusted, godly friend, and to receive it without defending themselves. Cultivating a teachable heart is one of the surest paths to growth.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We resist hard truth in subtler ways than Micah's audience did.
- Defensiveness and selective company shield us from correction.
- The wise invite reproof; only fools hate it (Proverbs 12:1).
- God often speaks through feedback we are tempted to resent.
- A teachable heart is a path to growth.

Discussion Prompts

- How open are you, honestly, to hard truth about yourself?
- What defenses do you tend to raise against correction?
- Who could you invite to speak honestly into your life, and how will you receive it?

Question 9

Student Question:

After all the judgment, chapter 2 ends with sudden hope: “I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel,” with their King passing before them and “the Lord at their head” (2:12–13). How is this promise of a gathered remnant under their King fulfilled in Christ gathering His church, the spiritual Israel, rather than in a future political restoration of national Israel, and why does that matter?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, resting on the sudden turn to hope in 2:12–13: “I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold... He who opens the breach goes up before them... their king passes on before them, the Lord at their head.” After all the judgment, God promises to gather a remnant under their King.

First, teach the remnant theme. Throughout the prophets, judgment is not God’s last word; He always preserves and gathers a faithful remnant. This remnant is the seed of God’s continuing purpose, and it points forward to the people God would gather in Christ. Judgment and salvation stand side by side, and salvation has the final word.

Now address the interpretation directly and graciously. This gathering is not a prophecy of a future earthly, political restoration of the modern nation-state of Israel, nor of a millennial kingdom centered there. It is Messianic. The imagery of sheep gathered into a fold under their shepherd-king is fulfilled in Jesus, the good Shepherd who said, “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also... So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Show that the gathered remnant is the church, the spiritual Israel. In Christ, the true children of Abraham are all who belong to Him by faith, Jew and Gentile alike (Galatians 3:26–29; Romans 9:6–8). The King who passes before His people, breaking open the way, is Christ, who leads His flock through death into life. The promise is gloriously fulfilled, just not in the way dispensationalism expects.

Apply it pastorally. The believer’s hope is not pinned to political maps or earthly kingdoms but to belonging to the flock that Christ has gathered and over which He reigns now. That is a hope no judgment, no exile, and no empire can undo. The same God who judges sin gathers and keeps His people forever.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Judgment is not God's final word; He preserves and gathers a remnant.
- The remnant theme points forward to the people gathered in Christ.
- The gathering is Messianic, not a future political restoration of national Israel.
- Jesus is the good Shepherd who gathers one flock (John 10:16).
- The gathered remnant is the church, the spiritual Israel (Galatians 3:26–29).
- Christ is the King who breaks open the way and leads His people.
- Our hope rests on belonging to Christ's flock, not on earthly kingdoms.

Discussion Prompts

- How is the promise of a gathered remnant under their King fulfilled in Christ and His church?
- Why is it important not to read this as a future political restoration of national Israel?
- How does belonging to the flock Christ has gathered give you unshakable hope?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over these two chapters, from the courtroom summons to the gathered remnant. Name one specific way Jesus is using this passage to make you more honest about sin, more grieved by injustice, and more grateful to belong to the flock He has gathered.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks the student to look back over these two chapters and name one specific way Christ is forming them through it. Press for a concrete, personal answer.

Gather the threads: the holiness of God before whom mountains melt, the seriousness of idolatry and injustice, the call to grieve over sin, the stewardship of power, the welcoming of hard truth, and the hope of belonging to Christ's gathered flock. Each is a place the Spirit may be working.

Help different people land differently. For one, the lesson is becoming honest about a comfortable sin. For another, it is using power to bless rather than take. For another, it is resting in the assurance of belonging to the flock Christ gathers and keeps.

Close in prayer that asks God for honesty about sin, a heart that grieves what grieves Him, and gratitude for the King who gathers His people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Transformation is specific and personal.
- Honesty about sin, grief over injustice, and gratitude are chief fruits.
- Belonging to Christ's flock is the believer's secure hope.
- The same text meets different hearts differently.
- Self-examination should end in prayer and concrete change.

Discussion Prompts

- Name one way Christ is making you more honest about sin through this passage.
- Which theme convicts you most: idolatry, injustice, or resisting hard truth?
- What concrete change will you make this week in response?