

Micah 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. God now turns from corrupt rulers (vv. 1-4) to false prophets. הַנְּבִיאִים הַמַּטְעִים אֶת־עַמִּי (ha-nevi'im hama'tim et-ammi, "the prophets that make my people err") indicts those who lead people astray. תָּעָה (ta'ah) means to wander, go astray, or be deceived. These aren't true prophets who occasionally stumble but false prophets whose ministry actively misleads.

The phrase הַנֹּשְׁכִים בְּשֵׁנֵיהֶם וְקָרְאוּ שָׁלוֹם (ha-noshkhim be-sheneihem ve-qare'u shalom, "who bite with their teeth and cry Peace") exposes mercenary motivation. They "bite"—possibly meaning eat/chew (being well-fed) or bite like animals seeking prey. When paid, they proclaim שָׁלוֹם (shalom, "peace, prosperity, well-being")—false assurance that all is well. But וְאַשֶׁר לֹא־יָתֵן עַל־פִּיהֶם וְקִדְּשׁוּ עָלָיו מִלְחָמָה (va'asher lo-yiten al-pihem ve-qidshu alav milchamah, "and he that putteth not into their mouths, they prepare war against him")—refuse to pay them, and they declare war (pronounce judgment).

This exposes prophetic prostitution: their message depends on payment, not God's word. True prophets speak God's message regardless of consequences (Jeremiah 1:17-19; Ezekiel 2:6-7). False prophets tailor messages to sponsors—prosperity to

the wealthy, judgment on the poor. Jesus warned of false prophets in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15); Paul condemned those who preach for dishonest gain (Titus 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:5).

Historical Context

Ancient Israel had professional prophets attached to royal courts and religious shrines who prophesied for fees. Legitimate prophets like Samuel and Elijah received support (1 Samuel 9:7-8; 1 Kings 17:9-16), but this degenerated into mercenary prophecy. By Micah's era, prophets functioned as hired guns—pronouncing blessing on paying clients and curses on non-payers. Jeremiah later faced these prophets who proclaimed "Peace, peace" when no peace existed (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). Ezekiel condemned prophets who "divine for money" (Ezekiel 13:19, 22:25-28). Micah 3:11 summarizes: "The prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD." They combined mercenary practice with religious pretense—a deadly combination.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How can we distinguish true prophetic ministry from mercenary religious professionals who tailor messages to donors?
2. What does it mean to 'make people err'—what responsibility do teachers/preachers bear for leading people astray?
3. In what ways might modern religious leaders proclaim 'peace' to paying supporters while declaring 'war' on those who don't contribute?

Malachi 2:8 (References Lord): But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Micah 3:11 (Prophecy): The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

Isaiah 3:12 (Parallel theme): As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

Jeremiah 23:27 (Parallel theme): Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

Micah 2:11 (Prophecy): If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.