

The Greatest Commandments and the Prophets, Part 2

Injustice and Unrighteousness



The Prophets Indicted the People For...

Ezekiel 22:27-31

Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.

The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.

And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord GOD.

- What specifically was wrong with the behavior of the people of Judah highlighted here, in common language?
- How did the behavior of the people indicate a lack of love for God and for their neighbor?
- What connections do you see between their lack of love for God and lack of love for neighbor?
- In what ways might people participate in injustice even if they are not the direct perpetrators of injustice?
- When God said He was searching for “a man... who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me”, what was he referring to, given the context?

The Prophets Indicted the People For...

Amos 2:6-8; 5:11-12

Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,

because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—
those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth
and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
a man and his father go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned;
they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge,
and in the house of their God they drink
the wine of those who have been fined.

Therefore because you trample on the poor
and you exact taxes of grain from him,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not dwell in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.
For I know how many are your transgressions
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and turn aside the needy in the gate.

- What specifically was wrong with the behavior of the people of Israel highlighted here, in common language?
- How did the behavior of the people indicate a lack of love for God and for their neighbor?
- What connections do you see between their lack of love for God and lack of love for neighbor?
- What does this passage tell us about how God looks on those who worship Him but simultaneously practice or participate in injustice?

The Prophets Indicted the People For...

Jeremiah 22:13-17

“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice,
who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing
and does not give him his wages,
who says, ‘I will build myself a great house
with spacious upper rooms,’
who cuts out windows for it,
paneling it with cedar
and painting it with vermilion.
Do you think you are a king
because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.
He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
then it was well.
Is not this to know me?
declares the LORD.
But you have eyes and heart
only for your dishonest gain,
for shedding innocent blood,
and for practicing oppression and violence.”

- What specifically was wrong with the behavior of the people of Judah highlighted here, in common language?
- How did the behavior of the people indicate a lack of love for God and for their neighbor?
- What connections do you see between their lack of love for God and lack of love for neighbor?
- In the latter part of this passage (“Do you think you are a king..” and after), God addresses the attitudes of the wealthy. What is a righteous attitude regarding one’s own wealth, and what is an unrighteous attitude regarding one’s own wealth, according to God?

The Prophets Indicted the People For...

Isaiah 5:7-10

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, an outcry!

Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.

The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
“Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.”

- What specifically was wrong with the behavior of the people of Israel and Judah highlighted here, in our own common language?
- How did the behavior of the people indicate a lack of love for God and for their neighbor?
- What connections do you see between their lack of love for God and lack of love for neighbor?
- What does God say will happen to the wealth of those who seek wealth greedily or through injustice?

The Prophets Called the People to Repentance

Isaiah 1:16-17

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.

Jeremiah 7:5-7

For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

Jeremiah 22:1-5

Thus says the LORD: "Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

What did the people need to do to repent?

What were the consequences of not repenting?

What were the rewards for repenting?