

Lesson 2

Micah 4-5: The Glory of the Last Days

Introduction

As we come to the end of chapter three, Micah gives the tragic details of what will become of the Holy City, Jerusalem: *Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest*, Micah 3:12. Even though the destruction was still over a century away, Micah spoke of these events as a fact. The rejection of God and the spiritual adultery committed by the children of Israel would not be tolerated forever. As we move into chapter four, Micah begins to look to the days of the Messiah. The period of the Messiah would usher in the *last days*. Rather than looking millenniums into the far-off future, Micah's prophecy investigates the period of Jesus and the blessings of the early church. The *last days* simply refer to the last dispensation of time. Biblical history may be divided into three major sections:

- *Patriarchal times* – covering time from creation to Mt. Sinai.
- *Mosaical times* – covering time from Mt. Sinai to Jesus Christ and His death on the cross.
- *Christian times* – covering time from the death of Jesus to the present.

Some have taken the contents of these verses and applied them to events at the end of time. Micah is not looking that far ahead. (This will also be a good time to review the *near view/far view* handout on prophecy we mentioned in an earlier lesson.)

The new kingdom *on the mountain of the Lord* is a spiritual kingdom. In that day, all nations will be invited to come to the *mountain of the Lord* to be taught of the ways of God, 4:2. No longer would God specifically focus on the Jews; His blessings and salvation are for men and women in all nations. This would prove to be a very difficult concept for the Jews to accept, Acts 15. The last sentence of 4:2 is significant. *For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*. This was fulfilled in Luke 24:47 when Jesus declared that the gospel would go forth from Jerusalem and be preached to all nations. The disciples were instructed to stay in Jerusalem until they were *clothed with power from on high*, Luke 24:49.

In the new spiritual kingdom, God is the judge in all things. Instead of devoting their energies to war, those in God's kingdom seek to learn the ways of the Lord. A spiritual kingdom cannot be defended with carnal, physical weapons. Jesus spoke of the spiritual nature of the kingdom in John 18:36: *My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm*. An understanding of this fact is essential in understanding the prophecy of Micah. The spiritual kingdom will be characterized by peace and safety which is secured by the promise of God. *For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken*, 4:4. Christians are those who *walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever*, 4:5. Because we belong to a higher kingdom, we should live with confidence in the physical—knowing our eternity will be blessed

because of the promises of God. What Micah speaks of in these verses has been fulfilled in Christ. The Hebrew writer speaks of New Testament Christians as having received a kingdom. We read:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, Hebrews 12:22-28

During the days of Jesus, God would assemble the lame, outcasts, and those He had afflicted. These are the remnant of Jews who would have an opportunity to be restored to God's favor in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. They will be made into a *strong nation*, 4:7. The Messiah would come from this remnant. Even though the house of David had fallen, it would be restored, Amos 9:11-12. This would be through Jesus Christ.

Back to the present

Beginning in verse nine, the focus comes back to the present. Before the glorious things mentioned in the first few verses of the chapter take place, the children of Israel would undergo serious chastisement. They would experience great pain and suffering in their ordeal. The king that was supposed to protect them was ineffective in his efforts to stave off the invading forces of the enemy. The people were going to be carried off into captivity, being cast out of the protection of the city. This is what is meant by *dwelling in the field*. They would be without protection against the enemy. The enemy mentioned here is Babylon. How strange this must have sounded to the people of Micah's day. At this point, Assyria is the great world power flexing its muscles. In the late 8th century, many would have had a hard time imagining a power subjugated by the Assyrians as rising to a level of a world superpower. But this is exactly what happened, and what Micah foretold came true. Babylon carried Judah and Jerusalem into captivity in 587 B.C.

In verses eleven through thirteen, the focus turns on the nations gathered against Jerusalem at the present. In the previous lesson, we mentioned how the armies of Assyria were pressing against Judah on the northern and western fronts. *Many nations were gathered against them*, probably refers to the content and makeup of the Assyrian army. They wished to destroy Judah and Jerusalem, but they did not *know the thoughts of the Lord, and they do not understand His purpose*, 4:12. God had gathered them together to be threshed. Does this have reference to the historical events Isaiah speaks of in Isaiah 37:36-38? Does it have to do with the ultimate humbling and annihilation of Assyria? Either way, Micah tells his audience to *arise and thresh*, 4:13. Ultimately the armies of Sennacherib would be taken out by the LORD, and around a century later, the Assyrians would be destroyed. Verse one of chapter five is better understood

in the context of 4:9-13. The Assyrians had laid siege against Jerusalem (Sennacherib, 701 B.C.). While Judah would be humbled by this occurrence, they would immerge triumphant by the hand of God.

More Messianic prophecy

Bethlehem comes into view as being the place the Messiah would be born. The Messiah comes from God; *His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity*, 5:2. Bethlehem was a small, insignificant town. Located five miles south of Jerusalem, it would have been an unlikely place for the birth of such a prominent one. That the ruler in Israel would be born in Bethlehem and not Jerusalem is proof that the royal family would be out of power temporarily. God would give up His people *until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child*, 5:3. Who is the woman in labor? Is it Mary the mother of Jesus? Is it the children of Israel who are likened to a woman in labor in 4:10? The meaning is not clear. Smith says the woman “must be the virgin who would conceive and bear a son called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). The future king’s birth would signal the beginning of the end of the nation’s oppression.”¹ Hailey presents an opposite view. “Considered in the light of the context, it seems the prophet is speaking of the remnant of Jehovah’s faithful of 4:10, who in their captivity will be like a woman in travail. The woman...is the faithful remnant who would go through Babylonian captivity before the ruler would come.” Hailey then points to a parallel with Isaiah 66:4-8 to back up his point.²

This ruler (the Messiah) would *shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord*, 5:4. His strength would be recognized throughout the earth. Who is the Assyrian mentioned in 5:5b? This is not the literal Assyrian, but Micah is looking ahead to spiritual enemies during the reign of the Messiah. Even though the enemy might have some small victories, ultimately the forces of God will conquer. *Shepherds* would be raised to fight off the enemy. *Seven* is important. In the Bible, this number symbolizes something that is complete, total, and perfect. *Eight* would be a number that symbolizes something beyond necessary. These shepherds would *shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, The land of Nimrod at its entrances*, 5:6. The sword that is used here is spiritual in nature. Again, physical weapons of war are not needed in a spiritual kingdom, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:17. Giving further credence to the idea that “Assyria” in 5:5-6 represents spiritual enemies is seen by the mentioning of *Nimrod*. Nimrod is mentioned in Genesis 10:8 and was ruled by a godless ruler who opposed all that is good. Nimrod did not exist during the days of Micah.

Those who come to Christ in the church age can be assured of God’s power to help them overcome spiritual enemies. Micah says that the remnant of Jacob would be *among many peoples Like dew from the Lord, Like showers on vegetation Which do not wait for man Or delay for the sons of men*, 5:7. They would also be among the nations and peoples *Like a young lion among flocks of sheep, Which, if he passes through, Tramples down and tears, And there is none to rescue*, 5:8. In other places, we have discussed how the prophets used the language of their day to convey a spiritual message. Those who serve the Lord can be assured of power and victory. This is because of Jesus Christ.

In verses ten through fifteen, Micah continues his prophecy concerning things to take place during the church age. In the kingdom of Jesus, there will be no need for physical weapons of war. God will cut them off and destroy them. This had been God’s expectations all along—He wanted His people to

depend upon Him, and not the strength of their own might. There would be no fortified cities in the new kingdom as the emphasis shifts from the physical to the spiritual. Sorcery, black magic, and soothsaying would be cut off, along with all idols. There would no longer be any mixing of these things with the true religion of God. God would *execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed*, 5:15. This execution of vengeance is not revenge, but is a just response of deity in the punishment of iniquity. Those who rebel against God will not suffer a pleasant fate.

For Discussion

1. What are the three basic divisions of time in the Bible?
2. What are the *last days*?
3. Is the kingdom of the Messiah spiritual or physical in nature? Explain your answer.
4. Who would be entitled to the blessings during the days of the Messiah?
5. Who would carry Judah into captivity in 587 B.C.?
6. From where would the Messiah come? Was this a prominent place?
7. Who is the woman in labor in 5:3?
8. Who is the "Assyrian" in 5:5?

9. List the things that would come to pass during the reign of the Messiah: 5:10-15.

10. What in this lesson prompted you to better spiritual living?

(Endnotes)

1 Smith, James E. *The Minor Prophets*. p. 332

2 Hailey, Homer, E. *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Louisville, KY: Religious Supply, 1993), p. 209-10