

The Shepherd-King Who Saves His People Micah 5:1-15

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Consider this vision of the world. A world in which people flock to hear God's laws and obey them. A world in which people live together in peace and security. A world in which all things are restored, justice and righteousness are always done, and everyone and everything flourishes according to God's original design. Sounds great. It is the picture of a future world that Micah painted for us in chapter four. It is the kingdom of God on earth.

But how is this kingdom going to come?

Tim Keller writes, *Years ago, I read an ad in the New York Times that said, "The meaning of Christmas is that love will triumph and that we will be able to put together a world of unity and peace." In other words, we have the light within us, and so we are the ones who can dispel the darkness of the world. We can overcome poverty, injustice, violence, and evil. If we work together, we can create a "world of unity and peace."* (Hidden Christmas, 2016, pp. 7-8)

There is this idea that the kingdom of God can come through our efforts and ingenuity. But Micah 5 informs us that the kingdom doesn't come without the King. Micah 4 paints the picture of the kingdom. Micah 5 tells us that this kingdom is only realized through the coming of the King. It is the Shepherd-King who comes to save his people.

As we consider Micah 5 today, we will discover three connections between the Shepherd-King and his kingdom.

I. A ruler who brings a kingdom of peace (vv. 1-6).

- A. Judah's ruler is besieged and insulted.
 - 1. Probably referring to Hezekiah who was threatened by Sennacherib's Assyrian army (2 Kgs. 18-20; Isa. 36-37).
 - 2. Sennacherib insulted Hezekiah publicly. He conquered a number of key cities in Judah on his way to Jerusalem and took some captives.
- B. God promises to send a ruler in the future who will establish a kingdom of peace.
 - 1. He will come from Bethlehem-Ephrathah.
 - a. This is the birthplace of David. It is a small village about 5 miles SW of Jerusalem.
 - b. From this small village will arise a ruler in Israel.
 - 1) His origins are from of old, from ancient days. This refers to the ancient origins of the King in the line of David as promised in places like Genesis 49:10 and 2 Samuel 7:12-16.
 - 2) This ruler will be "birthed" at the proper time in God's plan through the Davidic lineage.
 - 3) He will rule (stand and shepherd) his people in the strength of the Lord. He will feed, protect, and care for them as the greater Shepherd-King and ancestor of David.
 - 4) His people will live in security because of his greatness.
 - 5) He will be their peace. Isa. 9:6 says he is the Prince of Peace. He will be the source of their complete "shalom" in all of life.

- 6) He will deliver them from all their enemies. Assyria was the immediate threat during Micah's day. But it also symbolizes the enemies of God's people who will be defeated by the King to give peace to his people.
2. The NT makes it clear that Jesus is the Shepherd-King.
 - a. Matthew 2:6 records the response of the chief priests and scribes to the question of Herod about the birthplace of the Messiah. They quoted Micah 5:2 and alluded to 2 Sam. 5:2.
 - b. Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of these prophetic statements about a coming Davidic King who would be the Shepherd-King and deliverer of God's people.
 - c. It is probable that Paul also alludes to Micah 5:5 in Ephesians 2:14 when he says about Jesus, "He is our peace."

So Micah clarifies for us that the kingdom of peace comes through the Shepherd-King who is our peace. To participate in the kingdom, we must accept the reign of the King.

Think of it in this way. There is a kingdom of justice, beauty, righteousness and peace in which all things are flourishing in delight. This kingdom is ruled by a perfect King. Now imagine that there are hostile rebels who want to enjoy the blessings of this kingdom but they are unwilling to lay down arms against the perfect King. Will those rebels be welcomed into the kingdom? Will they enjoy the blessings of the kingdom as long as they rebel and resist the rule of the King?

Friends, Jesus is that King. We are the rebels. Romans 5:6-11 tells us that because of our sin, we are hostile rebels against King Jesus. We are his enemies. But King Jesus actually loves his enemies and died for them on the cross to reconcile them to himself. When we lay down our arms, cease our rebellion, and trust in Jesus, we are reconciled to the King and we have peace with him. Only then are we welcomed into his kingdom of peace and blessing.

You can live in that kingdom of peace one day. But you must first accept the rule of the King. Will you trust in him and be reconciled?

In vv. 1-5, Micah emphasizes a ruler who brings a kingdom of peace. Secondly in vv. 7-9...

II. A remnant who fulfills a kingdom purpose (vv. 7-9).

- A. This remnant refers to the restored people of God.
 1. "Then" indicates that this remnant refers to the people who are present when the Shepherd-King reigns.
 2. This remnant is the restored nation of Israel.
- B. Two illustrations communicate the purpose of this remnant.
 1. Both illustrations view the impact of the remnant on the surrounding nations.
 - a. They will be a blessing like the dew or showers God sends on the grass.
 - b. They will be victorious over their enemies like a lion over its prey.
 2. This seems to be roughly equivalent to the Abrahamic promise in Gen. 12:3.
 - a. God promises to bless the nations through Abraham.
 - b. God also promises to curse those who curse his people.

As we read the Old Testament, we see these twin purposes for the nation of Israel. They were to be a conduit of God's blessing to the nations around them. They were to be "light to the Gentiles." But they were also a reminder of the ultimate victory of God over those who oppose him and his people.

Though not in exactly the same way, as Christians, we have a dual effect on the world around us. We are to be a refreshing blessing bringing healing and life through the gospel. But we also bring a message of judgment for those who reject the King and his kingdom. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:16, as Christians proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, to some it is a sweet fragrance of life and to others a stench of death. It all depends on whether a person accepts or rejects the good news of the Shepherd-King.

We need to be God's distinct and obedient people as we live among the nations. That distinct message and example continues to be an instrument of both blessing and judgment in the hands of God.

There is a ruler who brings a kingdom of peace. There is a remnant who fulfills a kingdom purpose. In vv. 10-15 we see...

III. The removal of all substitute saviors (vv. 10-15).

- A. The Lord purges his people of their idols, their substitute saviors.
 1. Note the action of God in the repeated words "I will cut off."
 2. The list of things that the Lord will remove from his people is a list of idols.
 - a. The material idols of military strength and defense (vv. 10-11). These are things we trust in to make us feel strong and safe.
 - b. The religious idols of false spiritual practices (vv. 12-14). These are things we trust in to make us feel spiritually connected and productive.
 3. In each case, whether material or spiritual, these things became substitute saviors that people were trusting in and hoping in rather than God.

Let's try to put this issue of idolatry in the context of Micah 4-5. Idolatry is trying to get the blessings of the kingdom while by-passing the King. In other words, an idol is something you hope in other than King Jesus to bring you the peace, salvation, and strength that his kingdom promises.

So why is God intent on purging idolatry from the lives of his people? Let me suggest two important reasons.

- **Idolatry assaults God's glory.** He is the only true and living God. There is no other. To worship or hope in an idol is to give to a created thing what only the Creator deserves. It is spiritual adultery to give worship to someone or something other than God. Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other nor my praise to carved idols."
- **Idolatry assaults your peace.** God hates idolatry because in the end, he knows the emptiness that awaits those who trust in false gods. Idols promise much but deliver nothing. Listen to the way that Jeremiah addresses this issue in Jer. 2:11-13. Did you hear

that? Idolatry is trading a fountain of living water for a broken cistern that can't hold water. What a graphic picture of disappointment.

Idolatry is like drinking saltwater. You think it is going to satisfy your thirst. It ends up only making you more thirsty and eventually killing you.

So, God is intent on purging idols out of your life for his glory and for your peace. Have you stopped to think that some of the disappointments you have experienced could be God weaning you away from an idol in your life? Do you realize that when God pulls those rugs of idolatry out from under your feet He is performing an act of love and mercy in your life?

Conclusion

We have seen that the glorious kingdom of peace that God promised in Micah 4 only comes through the Shepherd-King promised in Micah 5. If we want the kingdom, we must accept the rule of the King. He alone is the Savior who can bring us into that kingdom.

What substitute saviors are you tempted to trust in today? Here are a few diagnostic statements. How would you answer these?

- I could never be happy if I didn't have _____.
- My life would be ruined if _____.
- My sense of security comes from _____.
- _____ gives me the greatest joy in life.

I could go on but you get the point. Some of the things we might fill in those blanks with are not evil or illegitimate things. They may in fact be gifts from God. But when we put our trust in God's gifts rather than in God himself, we have been seduced by a subtle kind of idolatry.

It is right to rejoice in the blessings of the kingdom and enjoy them to the fullest. But we should never substitute those blessings for the King himself or seek to possess those blessings while ignoring the King.

So, how do we recover from idolatry? Repent of trusting in an idol. Refocus your life on the supremacy of the King. Rejoice in the forgiveness of your sin. Resume a life of true worship.