

Who is Like the Lord?

Israel's captivity, return, and victory (4:9-5:1)

Intro: The prophets of God are often thought of as speaking about the distant future of Israel as they speak of the Messiah and His kingdom; but the prophets also received messages concerning the near future of Israel. These prophecies too are impressive displays of Peter's affirmation:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

In this section Micah makes some remarkable statements about the near future of Israel.

Prophecy of the captivity of Israel

Israel is pictured as suffering great pain like a woman in labor because her king has been taken away.

"Now, why do you cry out loudly? Is there no king among you, or has your counselor perished, that agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth? (Micah 4:9)

That pain was to be experienced in being taken into exile away from their homeland.

"Writhe and labor to give birth, Daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth, for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field, and go to Babylon. (Micah 4:10a)

Micah's prophecy is especially interesting due to the political conditions of the times.

During the period of Micah's life the dominant power of the world was Assyria not Babylon. For most of Micah's life & ministry the Assyrians had been invading Palestine.

Tiglath Pileser had made campaigns against the northern kingdom before the fall of Samaria (1 Kg. 15:29)..

His successors, Shalmaneser and Sargon destroyed Samaria the capital of the northern kingdom (722 BC) and took the northern kingdom in Assyrian captivity (2 Kg. 17:6, 18:9).

Later Sennacherib invaded Palestine taking many Jewish cities and coming to the very gates of Jerusalem before being defeated (2 Kg. 18:13).

The Babylonians were under the dominion of Assyria and hardly in the picture as a world power. Had Micah relied on his own powers of observation he would have made more sense to predict that the Assyrians would take Israel into captivity.

Yet God could foresee what Micah could not and revealed to him the future history of the two kingdoms and the effect on the kingdom of Judah.

Nearly a hundred years later, the Babylonians revolted against Assyrian and defeated them in battle at Nineveh in 614 BC. Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian general established himself as monarch of a new empire and set his sights on conquest of the west.

In 605 BC he invaded Judah and by 586 BC had taken the people of Judah into captivity just as Micah had said well over a hundred years before!

The promise of Israel's return

Yet in spite of the destruction predicted, Micah also immediately encourages Israel to realize that they will not be abandoned by the Lord to captivity.

There you will be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. (Micah 4:10b)

Israel's history follows the prediction of Micah precisely.

The Babylonian kingdom was defeated by Cyrus in 539 BC.

Perhaps through the influence of the Jewish prophets he decreed that all expatriated people could return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1). In 536 the Israelites led by Zerubbabel made their way back to the homeland, rebuilt their temple, and were established as a people in Palestine again just as the Lord had said nearly 200 years before!

The promise of Israel's victory over her enemies

In this section Micah shows that when Israel was taken into captivity the nations that joined together against her intended her destruction, but God had only intended her punishment for unfaithfulness to Him. The captivity was God's discipline for unfaithfulness, but He would not be unfaithful to the promises that He had made to His people in the past. His whole purpose was bound up in the preservation of the Israelite people so as to bring His Son into the world.

“And now many nations have been assembled against you who say, ‘Let her be polluted, and let our eyes gloat over Zion.’ But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, and they do not understand His purpose; for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor. (Micah 4:11-12)

The enemies of Israel did not know it, but God was using them like pawns on a chess board to bring about His purposes and the establishment of His kingdom in the entire world through the coming Christ. Thus, Israel is encouraged to “thresh” the nations God has gathered.

“Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion, for your horn I will make iron and your hoofs I will make bronze, that you may pulverize many peoples, that you may devote to the Lord their unjust gain and their wealth to the Lord of all the earth. Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; they have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. (Micah 4:13-5:1)

What is the fulfillment of this final part of the promise? It is fulfilled in the kingdom of Jesus Christ which would have dominion over all kingdoms of the world and bring to an end all other kingdom of this world.

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (1 Corinthians 15:25)

Conclusion: Such promises and their fulfillment should give us great encouragement and assurance. Who could have predicted such things? Who could have known what God had in mind for the nation of Israel at the time Micah lived? Yet with absolute precision he has outlined their history—a history that took hundred of years to fulfill and which continues to be fulfilled in the kingdom of Jesus Christ and its ultimate victory over all evil.

Who is like the Lord who can foresee the destinies of men and fulfill His purposes for the nations? Is there any doubt that God will complete His promise to defeat all His enemies and give victory to His people?