

“Who is Like the Lord?”—Micah’s Prophecies of the Kingdom to Come God’s influence among the nations (4:1-5)

Intro: As we noticed this morning Israel’s OT prophets brought powerful messages to the people of their own times, revealing to them God’s will for the present generation; but the prophets did much more. With the help of the Holy Spirit guiding them, they spoke of God’s plans for the future of Israel. These prophecies Peter said, “were not a matter of private interpretation, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1).

Studying these prophecies can not only strengthen our faith, but give us clearer insight into the purpose of God in choosing Israel as His people and using them in the development of His kingdom on earth. Chapters 4-5 of Micah stand among the great chapters of the Bible in speaking about the coming kingdom of God. These prophecies coming from a man named “Micah” whose name means, “Who is like the Lord?” have a special meaning; because they show us indeed that there is no one like the God we worship and serve and Micah’s prophecies prove it!

Put yourself into the place of the ancient Jew and think of the excitement with which he would have heard Micah speak about Israel’s place in the plan of God. Micah came with a prophecy of Israel’s future (4:1-5)

The prophecy of God’s influence among the nations

It might be helpful to remember the situation as it existed at the time Micah spoke and wrote these words.

Only in this little space of Palestine was God honored among the nations; and more lately, many of those in Israel had turned away from Him to serve the gods of the nations around them.

God had chosen Israel to be His people delivering them from bondage and bringing them into the land of Canaan.

He had made them a kingdom of which He was the ruler; but they had rejected Him and wanted a earthly king like the nations around them.

Though some of those kings had honored God, many of them had allowed the practice of things contrary to the covenant God made with Israel.

Thus, many of the Israelites were unfaithful to the Lord and Micah prophesies the judgment of God would come upon them because of it!

*Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight, who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with violent injustice. Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord saying, “Is not the Lord in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us.” Therefore, on account of you, **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 3:9-12)

But now notice against this backdrop the things that would take place.

Mount Moriah (Zion) would be established as the chief of the mountains

And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. (Micah 4:1)

The mountain of the house of the Lord is Mt. Moriah. It is the mountain upon which the temple had been built and it is a part of the larger Mt. Zion upon which Jerusalem was built and which was the national seat of the kingdom of Israel.

Micah does not mean to say that Moriah and Zion will be physically elevated but it will be exalted in the minds of men. What Micah foresees is that something will happen to make people change their estimation of Jerusalem. You can imagine how amazed and excited the Jews would be to hear such a statement knowing how little and despised Jerusalem was among the nations of his day.

People of all nations coming to Jerusalem to the temple to learn the ways of the Lord.

“... and the peoples will stream to it and many nations will come and say, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths. For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Micah 4:2)

Micah pictures the peoples of the world (the Gentiles) coming to Jerusalem, to the temple where God had dwelt, to learn from the God of Israel. They would want to know what the God of Israel thinks and they want to walk in the ways that He teaches! Thus, by way of explanation Micah declares that God’s law would go forth from Zion (the mountain of Jerusalem) and from Jerusalem (the city itself). What an amazing prophecy, that during a time when the Gentiles served idols and Israel was unfaithful to the Lord, Micah speaks of a time when even the Gentiles will want to know what the Lord says.

God’s word would provide the principles by which the nations would conduct themselves toward other nations.

And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. (Micah 4:3)

The word of the Lord would instruct the peoples of far away nations as to how they should conduct themselves. Instead of conducting themselves on the principles of hatred and war, they will conduct themselves on the basis of love and peace.

The result would be that the nations would live in peace with one another.

Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war.

Those who hear the words of the Lord are pictured as taking their instruments of warfare and turning them into instruments of agriculture. They just don't need arsenals any more. Can you imagine the impact that this message had in a day in which Israel lived under constant threat of invasion by the surrounding nations and where the world was in a state of continued political upheaval due to one nation fighting against another?

As a result the people of each nation would enjoy peace and prosperity.

And each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. (Micah 4:4)

In the agricultural society of the ancient world, this was the epitome of peace and security. You could plant your vineyard and orchard and never worry about it being razed by the enemy. Instead you could watch it grow and become a shade under which one could sit and enjoy relief from the hot sun, content without fear.

So Micah said men would live “in the latter days”. But what happened to this beautiful picture? One can hardly look at our world and see a literal fulfillment of Micah’s words. In the physical world we see:

Jerusalem is still despised and insignificant.

The temple of the Lord no longer exists.

The nations have little if any interest in what the God of Israel says about anything.

If there is any we know about our world and its history, it is has been continuous stream of hostility and conflict. War and violence is rampant in our world as it has been in every century since the time of Micah. Now we hear terms like “world war” and “global terror”, hardly the description of Micah’s utopian world of safety, security, and prosperity.

Micah’s prophecy raises many questions:

Have the words of God through Micah failed?

Has there been or is there yet to be a reality that fulfills these sublime pictures?

Are we to expect these prophecies to be fulfilled by a millennial kingdom as the premillennialists teach?

Are these the pictures of an earthly paradise yet to be created as the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach?

Or is there another solution?

The NT fulfillment—God’s universal kingdom of peace

Micah, in language suitable to the times in which he lived, was giving us a picture of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the present age. Shortly before Jesus ascended to heaven He gave the apostles a crash course on OT prophecy and here is the gist of the OT message as Jesus taught it to them: Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses

*and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, **beginning from Jerusalem.** (Luke 24:44-47)*

What possible passage would have prompted Jesus to make this statement other than the prophecy of Micah 4 and its parallel in Isaiah 2? Here then is the key that opens the prophecy of Micah 4. Couched in the language of the old reality, Micah speaks of a new reality—the kingdom or church of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, by his miraculous ministry, by his sacrificial death, by his victorious resurrection, by His glorious ascension to the Father’s right hand, by His sending of the Holy Spirit, established Himself as the Christ of OT prophecy and Jerusalem as the seat of His kingdom. From it He sent forth His apostles with the message of salvation to all the nations.

“... repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:44-47)

The teaching of the God of Israel became the instruction for people of all nations.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19)

“... repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:44-47)

As a result of the spread of this teaching people from all the nations coexist together based on the principle of love and peace as demonstrated by Jesus Himself.

*For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. **And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near;** for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:14-18)*

Within the framework of His kingdom, all the nations can enjoy the peace and prosperity of a life in submission to God and if the promises of Micah are not fully satisfied by these blessings, then we can only look to the “new Jerusalem” of Rev. 21-22 for the final and complete fulfillment of them.

God’s promise through Micah has its fulfillment in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The promise of universal peace finds its hope and realization only among those who come to Jesus Christ and who make up His kingdom. If we have properly understood Jesus’ words, then the fulfillment of Micah’s

prophecy began with the proclamation of the gospel in Jerusalem and in its abiding results in the people who hear and obey it. We therefore do not have to look for a future fulfillment in the millennium as the premillennialists teach nor in the earthly utopian world of the JW's.

Conclusion: Truly the prophecy of Micah 4 should cause us to marvel.

Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. (Micah 7:18)

Who is like the Lord? Who could predict these things as Micah did over seven hundred years before their fulfillment?

Who is like the Lord? Who could by the power of His own love bring to an end the conflict of the people of all nations? Only the power of the God of Israel exerted through His message of love for all mankind in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ! This is the only hope of peace in this world.