

## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Micah 4:6-8; 5:1-9

Paul told the Christians in Rome that the accounts and prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures can teach us about how God interacts with us and gives us hope and encouragement as we (followers of Christ) experience God's promises being fulfilled. Many of the messages that God gave through the prophets addressed the consequences of people deciding for themselves what was right and wrong rather than believing and trusting God's word. These consequences were judgments which resulted in a lot of negative outcomes for the people who eat of the fruit of that tree. That was the bad news which was then followed by promises (messages of hope) of restoration to better times and positive outcomes in the future for those who repented and aligned themselves with God. It certainly appears that the pattern we see used by many of the prophets of this time was that the "bad news" was related to what would happen to the physical nation or city in the near term and the messages of the good news were about spiritual things that would come about in the future.

Micah followed this same pattern as he (in chapter 3) related God's indictment of Judah and the corrupt leadership of that kingdom. After pronouncing God's divine judgment upon Jerusalem (that it would become a wasteland and Zion would be like a plowed field), his message turned (in chapter 4) to promises of a time of restoration (for "a remnant") which he compared to the glory days of David and Solomon. This time would be in the "latter days" which is generally accepted as the "messianic age" and the coming of the Kingdom of God. There is even a promise that the Gentiles (nations) would come into this Kingdom of God which would be a fulfillment of the promise we see in the Abrahamic covenant that "in Abraham's 'seed' all the nations would be blessed."

We are certain living in the last days. In the first verse of chapter four Micah wrote that during that time many people in the Gentile world would see what God was doing and would turn to Him as the only way of deliverance from the slavery and bondage of false religions. That to which they would turn was described by Micah as the "mountain of the house of the Lord." "Mountains" were euphemisms for places of worship and "house" was the dwelling place of the One they worshiped. Apparently, Paul borrowed this description in his letter to the Ephesians (2:22) where he described the church as the "dwelling place of God."

Micah then moved on to give us a preview of what God will do in the "latter days" or the age of Messiah and who will be participants in this new kingdom. Later on, we will learn about the Leader of this new Zion which would be a total contrast to the corrupt leadership that was evident in Jerusalem during Micah's time which was a contributing factor to the impending judgment that was coming.

### In That Day – 4:6-8

<sup>6</sup> In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; <sup>7</sup> and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore. <sup>8</sup> And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem. Micah 4:6-8 (ESV)

Micah saw a new age that was coming that would be the culmination of the main promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which would be the fulfillment of God's intent to bring humanity back into a proper relationship with Him. The first step in the process was (is) that God will assemble or gather people who were (are) separated from Him. The location of the assembly is

“the mountain of the house of Yahweh” as stated in verse two.

Since this prophecy points to the “Messianic Age,” then the location is not a reference to a geographical place but to the New Jerusalem that came down out of Heaven from God adorned as a Bride for her Husband, which is an unmistakable reference to the Church.

The identities of those who are assembled (called together) are those who stumble when they walk (the lame), those who have been rejected (those driven away), and those whom God has disciplined. It is unclear whether these descriptions are meant to make distinctions among the various peoples whom God will assemble or if this is just parallelism that is typically used in Hebrew writings.

We can relate these descriptive terms of the “lame,” the “rejected” and the “afflicted” to the Israelites who were dispersed by the Assyrians from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, or to the Jews in exile, or even to the down-trodden people of Israel during the time of the earthly ministry of Jesus that would happen seven hundred years after the prophecy of Micah. Just consider the similarity of these descriptions with the words that Jesus used in the Beatitudes (poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they which do hunger and thirst, the persecuted). These terms could also be applied to many in the Gentile nations who were living under the domination of pagan ideas and philosophies. Many of them gladly welcomed the gospel message that was preached to them by the missionaries of the first-century church. These latter two groups (Jews and Gentiles) came together in the church and experienced the Lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives as described by Micah in verse seven where we read, “and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.”

How do we relate the words of verse eight regarding “the former (or first) dominion” shall be experienced by those who were lame, rejected and afflicted who were gathered by God to become a strong nation? The Hebrew word used could be translated as “former” (meaning previous) or it could mean “first” or highest position. If “former” was the intended meaning, then this would likely be a reference to the glorious times experienced by Israel during the days of David and Solomon. If the meaning is “highest” or “greatest” dominion, then it suggests that this “new nation” (where Yahweh reigns from Mount Zion) would be greater than that of any previous or future kingdoms. There are (at least) four differences that we can mention. One obvious difference is that the David/Solomon kingdom was over the land of Israel, while Jesus’ kingdom is over all the earth. A second, is that the David/Solomon kingdom was limited in time, while Jesus’ kingdom is eternal. Third, David and Solomon were beset with sins in their own lives, while King Jesus is sinless. A fourth difference is seen in that both David and Solomon did not always look out for the welfare of the people who were subject to them, while the Good Shepherd ever watches over His flock and they “do not lack” what they need.

Micah had additional descriptions of the King Who would rule from Zion and of things that would happen that led up to the manifestation of His kingdom which we see as we skip ahead to chapter five.

### One Will Come – 5:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. <sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. <sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; <sup>6</sup> they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of

Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border. Micah 5:1–6 (ESV)

This part of the prophecy in verse one seems to reference a time when Jerusalem would be under attack. Some commentaries point to the Babylonian war against Judah that led to the fall of Jerusalem and the carrying away of the exiles in the time of Zedekiah. The reference to hitting the judge of Israel on the cheek could have been the humiliation to which Zedekiah was subjected as the Babylonians killed his sons as he was forced to watch and then they blinded him before taking him away to Babylon.

The call to the troops to gather has been interpreted to be a call to Jerusalem to defend herself against the invaders. Others have seen this as a call to the troops of Babylon who were coming to besiege the city of Jerusalem. In either case, the lesson for us to learn is that there are serious consequences for continuing to reject God's ways and refusing to walk in them.

Following this prediction of trouble for Judah, Micah laid out the promise of better days and a different ruler. In verses two through four Micah was given a glimpse into the future as God revealed to him the place of the birth of the Messiah Who would be born some 700 years later. Just as David was too young and too small to be considered to be the one whom God would have Samuel anoint as king, Bethlehem was too insignificant in the eyes of the world to be a place when the King of kings and Lord of lords would make His entrance on the stage of the world. This is just another example of "that which the world judges to be of no consequences, God sees in a different light."

The rulers of the house of Israel had proven to be unreliable up until this time, but God would provide Himself an experienced Ruler (coming forth from ancient times) who would shepherd the flock in the strength of the Lord. Until that time, the foes of Israel would rule over them and they would be a people in subjection to foreign powers. The time when "God would give them up" (v.3) was the 400 years of silence when there was no prophet in Israel (from Malachi to John the Baptist). When the Messiah came, he ushered in the Kingdom of God and those who come under His Lordship would in subjection to Him only. Those who would come under His Lordship would include "the rest of his brothers" which is an obvious reference to the Gentiles who, along with believing Jews, have become the Israel of God. A significant benefit of being the "Israel of God" is that they "shall dwell secure" or what we would state as the "security of the believer."

We see in verses five and six that those who are followers of the Ruler Who came from Bethlehem are at peace with God and have the peace of God. However, in this new kingdom there will still be opposition which was likened to the attacks that Israel had experienced from Assyria. To counter such opposition, God would provide shepherds to protect the kingdom against the same false teaching that was associated with the ancient reign of Nimrod that led to people building the Tower of Babel after the flood and before God's call of Abraham. This false teaching was essentially that of "salvation by works" rather than by grace through faith. These shepherds were likely references to the apostolic leadership of the early church that had to counter false teachings from those who choose to continue to oppose God. The use of the number seven which represents completeness would tell us that there are enough shepherds (actually more than enough, eight) to resist the attacks of the anti-Christian forces in the world.

Micah prophesied that these shepherds (the spiritual leaders of the church) would do more than just take a defensive stand against those who oppose God, but would act to take the influence of the Kingdom of God to people who were aligned with false gods and false religions. This action is likely a reference to missionary efforts to take the gospel message to the ends of the earth so that all can hear and learn of the love of God for all humanity. The mention of

“shepherding with the sword” can be easily tied in with Paul’s reference that the Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God which is the primary method of sharing the gospel.

### Then The Remnant – 5:7-9

<sup>7</sup> Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. <sup>8</sup> And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. <sup>9</sup> Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. Micah 5:7–9 (ESV)

God’s method for accomplishing His objective is to have Christians scattered throughout the world and for them to share the good news of God’s salvation through the completed work of Jesus on the Cross and to do this in such a way that the message is welcomed. As Peter advised his readers, all of us are to “be ready to give an account of the reason of the hope that is with you.” In order to make this happen, we have to live our lives in such a way that we communicate that there is a difference in who we are versus those of the world in which we find ourselves.

We have the promise that when we are fulfilling this calling of God on our lives, then God will enable us and even bring to our minds or give us the words we should say to share the message of salvation with those who realize they are lost and want to know God. Part of the needed preparation and the protection is realizing that the foes that we are battling in carrying out this commission are the “powers and principalities in the spiritual realm” and we are to overcome these as we put on the full armor of God and engage the battle in prayer before we take whatever actions God would have us undertake.

God had Micah give strong warnings to the people of Israel to return to Him and at the same time to offer them hope in the midst of the times of trouble. The fulfillment of that hope was far into the future. If our perspective is short-sighted (and most of the time it is), then we can become discouraged with what is happening around us. We must view all that is happening in our day in light of the overall plan of God for mankind in which Jesus reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords and we (who are in Christ) reign with Him.