

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 3 Micah

Opening prayer: Our Father, we come seeking Your will for our lives. May we hear some lessons from the prophet Micah who spoke to people in his own time, but the lesson that You gave him resound through all the generations since. In Your holy name, Amen.

Chapter 4 Prophecies of last day

This chapter is the description of Zion or Jerusalem during the last days. Arnold in his commentary reminds us that prophets were sometimes seeing vision like up on a mountain top. The things that you see in the distance seem much nearer than they are. You don't comprehend the hills and valleys that are between you. This commentator cites some of Paul's remarks about the return of Jesus that he thought would be soon. This fourth chapter of Micah's prophecy is one of the most remarkable parts of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit not only moves back and forth between the near and distant future but also between the agony of judgment and the joy of restoration. We read in it, as it were, the mental and spiritual struggle of God Himself in His going over the events that would befall His chosen people. The events of the captivity of Israel and Judah and the return of the captives from Babylon span a period of approximately two centuries. The deportation of the inhabitants of Samaria took place during Micah's lifetime but the fall of Jerusalem did not occur until well over a century after the prophet's death. The return from the captives lay about 200 years in the future when Micah began to prophesy.

Read Micah 4:1-3 Zion is the center of a renewed earth.

V 1-3 This is a prediction of the millennial kingdom, with Jerusalem as the center of worship and government. At that time swords will be beaten into plowshares. This talks about the ultimate restoration of Jerusalem. It becomes a world center. Mount Zion will be irresistible to every human being, not because of its altitude but because of its unearthly beauty and moral attraction. The nations will stream toward it because they want to be taught the ways of the Lord. Micah presents it as if it was the ambition of nations, not just individuals, to know the paths of the God of Jacob. Nations are, of course, made up of individuals and nationwide revivals consist in individual conversions. But seen in the context of the framework of God's judgment in which one nation overruns another and imposes its rule, deporting its inhabitants into exile, the mention of nations that want to follow God's law acquires new significance. Micah preaches the charter of the real United

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Nations, when he says that God "will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide." While some commentators talk about people coming to Jerusalem to find God, others say that people will come for their own rescue. Since Isaiah and Micah were contemporary prophets, it isn't surprising that the same Spirit of the Lord could give these two prophets the same word, to establish and emphasize His word. But we find that Joel also says similar things in his prophecy. When we look at the picture of world now and compare the statistics of the number of Christians with the total world population, we tend to believe that most people who live now and who have ever lived in this world will end up in hell. Yet God's promise to Micah opens to us the overwhelming vista of "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. During the reign of the Messiah, there will be no more war. There will still be conflicts between nations and individuals, but they will be justly and decisively resolved by the Messiah and those who reign with Him. This is the peace of enforced righteousness. There is no more war, and no more need for swords - so why not make them into plowshares? There is no more war because there is a new ruler on earth, Jesus Christ.

SEE CHART.

V 4 This is millennial kingdom and pictures the security of Israel. This image of plenty and security is derived from the account of the material prosperity of Israel in the days of Solomon.

1 Kings 4:25 During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree.

This became a common saying denoting peace and prosperity.

Zechariah 3:10 "In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree," declares the Lord Almighty."

Zechariah picked up the theme when he prophesied during the rebuilding of the temple. The return of the Shekinah would bring a condition of perfect peace and rest.

Read Micah 4:4-5

V 5 American Standard Version: For all the peoples walk everyone in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever.

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This verse brings us back from the future to the present. The nations have not yet decided to go up to Mount Zion in order to walk in the paths of the God of Jacob. But we have determined to walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. Guzik reminds us that in 1941 Franklin Roosevelt gave a famous speech about four freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Micah addressed these freedoms in the first five verses of this chapter.

- Freedom from ignorance (He will teach us His ways)
- Freedom from war (Neither shall they learn war anymore)
- Freedom from want (everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree)
- Freedom from fear (no one shall make them afraid)

In the Millennial reign, the inhabitants of earth will not be compelled to follow the Lord. Some will walk each in the name of his god; yet those who do walk in the name of the Lord will enjoy great blessing and peace.

Read Micah 4:6-8 The gathering of restored Zion.

V 6-8 Israel is to be regathered. God's restoration isn't just for the strong, but the weak and disadvantaged will especially know the blessing of His restoration. These promises are so glorious that it would be easy for Israel to think they are too good to be true. Therefore, God gives them a special promise, vowing to you it shall come. This verse mentions the lame, exile and grief. The paralysis of the lame would prevent their return from exile. Even before tragedy struck, God gave a promise of complete restoration. This promise was meant to carry them through the night.

Read Micah 4: 9-10 The pain before Zion's restoration

V 9-10 The Babylonian captivity was also in the future at the time of this writing and would intervene before the regathering of Israel. After spelling out the glory of restored Zion, now Micah tells them of some of the pain they will experience before it comes. Part of the pain will be a lack of leadership. As is common in the prophets, Micah intertwines ages - having just spoken of the Millennial Earth, now he speaks of Israel's deliverance from Babylonian captivity. This verse switches back from victory to failure, both in depicting the emotions of the nation of Israel as well as the emotions of God. Crying aloud and writhing in pain describe the reaction of the people. Jesus compared His suffering and death to the labor pains

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of a woman. As a theocracy, Israel was never without a king. Their rejection of God as the supreme authority brought the people to a moral quandary. It was the ultimate reason for their going into captivity. It sounds like a complete contradiction: "You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued. There seemed to be very little hope of life when King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and carried away its inhabitants. None of the captives will have felt that they went to Babylon to give birth to a new nation. Yet, this is what God promises the people about a century before it would happen."

Read Micah 4: 11-13 The strength of restored Zion among the nations.

V 11 This part of the prophecy looks beyond to the time of Armageddon, which ends the Great Tribulation in the coming of Christ. Though the nations were set against Israel, the Lord was for them. They like us don't understand the thoughts of the Lord. The Lord will deal with Israel's enemies as easily as a farmer works with the sheaves of grain on the threshing floor. When the Lord restores Zion, He will restore them in strength - as strong as an ox with an iron horn. This has its ultimate fulfillment in the Millennium when Israel will be lifted up as a "superpower" among the nations. God assures His people that He will take their ultimate defeat and change it into victory. This is what is expressed in the change of the image from a rape to a threshing floor. Both pictures portray a crushing, but the result of the threshing is that wheat is produced. There is a separation between wheat and straw and wheat and chaff. Yet, the captivity was the wages for Israel's sin. God, however, takes this tragedy and turns it into a victory. From the victim of oppression, God makes His children into judges of the world. As in the previous verse, there remains in the image a positive element since kernels of grains are being produced even from the judgment over the heathen nations. The chapter ends with an amazing statement in which God receives the ultimate glory for what was intended to be man's greatest shame. "You will devote their ill-gotten gains to the Lord, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth." The gains and wealth of a nation that had never taken God into account are made into instruments for the praise of God. Man gathers wealth for his own glory. On the Day of Judgment, man's wealth will turn out to be his shame but God's glory. This astounding turn of events is predicted all through Scripture.

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Chapter 5 Prophecy of first coming of Christ before second coming

Read Micah 5:1-2 From the lowly and humble in Israel comes a Ruler.

V 1 This verse probably belongs to the last chapter, as it is in the Hebrew text, and awaits future fulfillment. Or it could apply to King Zedekiah. Israel will be humbled by foreign powers, and even her judges will bear insults.

Read 2 Kings 25:7

King Zedekiah was captured and bound by Nebuchadnezzar's troops. While he was bound, he witnessed his sons being killed before him. Then to add insult to a terrible situation, they put out his eyes before taking him to Babylon. Wycliffe Bible Commentary says that this is a warning to Judah to marshal her forces for a siege.

V 2 The first mention of Bethlehem is the place where Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin. Bethlehem was well known as the hometown of David, Israel's greatest king; yet it was never a great or influential city. From a human perspective, this seems an impossibility. Yet God chose it as the birthplace of the Messiah, the Ruler in Israel.

Read Matthew 2:2, 5-6

The birth of Christ. This was quoted by the scribes to Herod when the wise men came, looking for "he that is born King of the Jews". The pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day seem to have not paid attention to this part of Micah's prophecy. Bethlehem means House of Bread, and Jesus is the Bread of Life. John 6:35. "And now for that word Ephratah. The meaning of it is, 'fruitfulness,' or 'abundance.'" Spurgeon says that Jesus was born in the house of fruitfulness; our fruitfulness comes from Bethlehem. Our hearts never produced one fruit or flower until they were watered with the Savior's blood." Micah's prophetic voice declares that though Jesus came from Bethlehem, He did not begin there. His goings forth are from eternity past. The eternal Son existed before He revealed Himself as "Jesus." The fact that He is eternal shows several things that David Guzik points out. It shows us the glory of Jesus, that He is far more than a man. It shows us the love of Jesus, that He would leave the glory of heaven for us. It shows us the nature of Jesus, that He would add humanity to His deity. It shows us the sympathy of Jesus, that He remains fully man and fully God.

Read Micah 5:3-5A The Ruler serves His flock.

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The rest of this chapter shows Christ is a shepherd to both Israel and the church. This bridges the gap between the first and second comings of Christ and beyond the second coming. It covers both the period of the church and the kingdom.

V3 Micah anticipates a future time - partially fulfilled in the Babylonian exile and return, ultimately fulfilled in the Great Tribulation and restoration of Israel - when the Lord will seem distant from Israel until the time for restoration is ready.

V 4 After the time of Israel's captivity the Lord will restore gloriously. The Ruler born in Bethlehem will tenderly care for His flock in the strength of the Lord. The people abide because of the greatness of the ruler from Bethlehem. This verse takes us beyond the horizon of time to when Jesus will reign in all His glory and peace will cover the earth.

V 5 Guzik translates this based on Ephesians 2:14 that He doesn't bring peace, He is peace. This verse is split.

Read Micah 5:5B-6 The Ruler delivers Jacob from Assyria

V 5B-6 After the pattern of the prophets, Micah blends near and distant ages in his prophecy. The threat of the Assyrian would come against both kingdoms shortly, but Micah also uses the idea of the Assyrian for any pagan nation or empire set against God's people. Though the enemies of God's people come against them, under God's blessing leaders will raise against them. God often works this way to deliver us from our enemies. Shultz reminds us that Assyria is called "the land of Nimrod" because Nimrod was the founder of Nineveh and because Assyria stands for all that rebels against the authority of God. Remember this the next time you hear about Jonah's hesitancy to preach in Nineveh. Would you go to China or Russia?

Read Micah 5:7-9 The remnant is large and triumphant.

V 7 When God delivers Zion it won't be a "small" deliverance. It will spread as wide as the dew and showers on the grass. The period involved in Micah's prophecy is longer than the whole history of the United States of America. When we look at this chapter and this book from that perspective, we understand how God wants us to stretch our vision beyond what we can see.

V 8-9 When God delivers Zion, it won't be a "weak" deliverance. It will strengthen Israel so that she will triumph over her enemies like a lion against sheep. Think of the strength of the Jewish people. Stalin and Hitler who both tried to extinguish

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the Jews are both dead and gone. The Jewish people still survive. This has its ultimate fulfillment in the Millennial Earth, when it is said that the lion will lie down with the lamb - but still, it's better to be the lion!

Read Micah 5:10-15 The Lord is exalted among the remnant.

V 10-14 In restored Zion, the Lord will not allow any of the idolatries Israel once indulged in. Instead, He will cut off all of those things, whether they are basically good like horses or cities or intrinsically evil like sorceries and sacred pillars.

V 15 God will not only look after Israel's purity; in the Millennial Earth the nations will also need to walk in purity before Him.

Schultz concludes his comments on this chapter by saying "it remains true of course that God's children can be polluted by the world in which they live. They will only have the strength of a lion if they are cleansed from the elements Micah condemns in the nations in these verses." He then cites

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. English Standard Version

Closing prayer: Lord help us to remember that you are peace and only in You will we find that peace that we always seek. In Jesus' name, amen.

Micah 4:1-3	Micah 5:1-2	2 Kings 25:7
Micah 4:4-5	Micah 5:3-5A	Matthew 2:2, 5-6
Micah 4:6-8	Micah 5:5B-6	
Micah 4: 9-10	Micah 5:7-9	
Micah 4: 11-13	Micah 5:10-15	