

12

Humble Beginnings

Peace and security come through obedience to God.

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

We know about sports fans who stopped watching a game because there seemed no way for their team to win, only to discover they missed one of the greatest comebacks in that team's history. There are times when things appear hopeless for God's people. But no matter how hopeless the situation seems, in the end God will do what seems impossible and turn their sorrow into joy through the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reign for eternity.

When have you witnessed a victory that came after you counted the situation or game to be hopeless or already lost? How do these types of situations impact a person in the future?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

MICAH 4:1–5:15

This section of the book of Micah reveals that someday in the future God will establish Himself as the one true King who will eternally reign over His people and all of the nations from Mount Zion. He will do this by replacing Israel's wicked kings with His own King who will shepherd them. Even though Micah prophesied that the temple would be destroyed in the near future (Mic. 3:12), sometime beyond that it would once again be established on Mount Zion. The nations will stream to it to receive instruction that they may live according to God's will (4:1-2). The Lord will establish peace on earth, and those who walk in the name of the Lord will do so for eternity (4:3-5). The Lord will gather to Himself all the injured and lame who had been scattered in exile and with this remnant build an eternally strong nation (4:6-8).

Before the people of God experienced restoration, they would experience a time of difficulty. The Babylonians would invade and carry the people of God into captivity (4:9-10). Nevertheless, this judgment would not be God's last act regarding His people, for He would redeem them from the grasp of their enemies (4:11-13).

In chapter 5, Micah returned to the message of Judah's imminent judgment as its enemies lay siege to it. These enemies would prevail and then strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod (5:1). Micah then revealed that God was planning to raise up a new King who would be born in Bethlehem. This King's origin is from antiquity (5:2). He would shepherd His people. He would be their peace, and His greatness will extend "to the ends of the earth" (5:4). For some among the nations, the remnant of Jacob would be a blessing, but for others it would be like a roaring lion bringing death. What's more, God would eradicate His people's ungodly practices from among them and take vengeance against the nations that disobeyed Him (5:7-15).

As you read Micah 4:6-8 and 5:1-9, note ways God reveal His faithful love for His people. How is God's faithful love seen in His promises?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

IN THAT DAY (MICAH 4:6-8)

⁶ On that day — this is the LORD’s declaration — I will assemble the lame and gather the scattered, those I have injured. ⁷ I will make the lame into a remnant, those far removed into a strong nation. Then the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time on and forever. ⁸ And you, watchtower for the flock, fortified hill of Daughter Zion, the former rule will come to you; sovereignty will come to Daughter Jerusalem.

VERSES 6-8

As bad as things were in the days of Micah, the prophet looked to a better day. The people of God faced imminent exile. They would be ripped from their land and taken captive to Babylon. They are described as ***lame, scattered, and injured***. They were weak, wounded and scattered sheep who had no shepherd (see Matt. 9:36). They were injured by the judgment of God, but that same God would gather a remnant from among them to continue the line of David.

God would assemble the people back in Jerusalem and ***make the lame into a remnant***. This emphasizes God’s grace. God wasn’t looking for the ones who had it together, the uninjured, or the strong. Rather, He looked among the lame, scattered, and injured and brought them out to create a remnant by His grace. All Christians have first found themselves in the position of the lame, scattered, and injured prior to experiencing the grace of God in their lives.

The ones ***far removed*** referred to those who would be exiled in Babylon. God would gather them again and make a ***strong nation*** from the weakened exiles. Certainly this happened as the exiles began to return to Jerusalem in 539 BC, but the nation was again scattered in AD 70 when the temple was destroyed. How could Micah say that ***the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time on and forevermore***? Obviously this statement must be read in light of the promises to come in Micah 5 about the birth of a Messiah in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). God regathered the people, and through that group of helpless people brought forth a Messiah who would reign forever, extending the line of David into eternity.

In verse 8, the Lord switched from saying what He will do for *them* to what will happen to **you**. The recipient of this poetic, direct address was Jerusalem, the ***watchtower for the flock***, and the ***fortified hill of Daughter Zion***. Jerusalem represented strength and security for the people of God. David established it as the capital of Israel, and it became known as the City of David. On Mount Zion, David built his palace and watched over his people, and Mount Zion was the place where God made His manifest presence known from His holy temple. Through Micah, the Lord promised that the Davidic kingdom will be restored under the rule of the Messiah (see Luke 1:32-33).

A day was coming when God would assemble a people out of those who had been scattered, a people who would return to Jerusalem, and God would establish them and rule over them forever. This promise for the future set the stage for the big birth announcement found in the next chapter of Micah’s prophecy.

How does the promise of a future bring hope when enduring God’s discipline?



BIBLE SKILL: *Create a compare/contrast chart to study a passage.*

Ezekiel wrote of the shepherd-king who will reign over the people of God. Read Ezekiel 34:17- 31 and compare it to Micah 4:6-8; 5:1-9. Note where Ezekiel and Micah’s messages are similar. Then note what is unique to Micah’s message and what is unique to Ezekiel’s message. How do both passages together anticipate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?

ONE WILL COME (MICAH 5:1-6)

¹ Now, daughter who is under attack, you slash yourself in grief; a siege is set against us! They are striking the judge of Israel on the cheek with a rod. ² Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times. ³ Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of the ruler's brothers will return to the people of Israel. ⁴ He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD his God. They will live securely, for then his greatness will extend to the ends of the earth. ⁵ He will be their peace. When Assyria invades our land, when it marches against our fortresses, we will raise against it seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. ⁶ They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with a drawn blade. So he will rescue us from Assyria when it invades our land, when it marches against our territory.

VERSES 1-3

After the message of hope in Micah 4:6-8, the prophet had some realistic words about what this nation would face prior to the fulfillment of that promise. They would have no king to guide them (4:9) and would be taken away into captivity in Babylon (4:10). They would be surrounded by nations who hated them and be required to do harsh physical labor (4:11-13). The first verse of chapter 5 continued to explore the harshness of the moment.

Verse 1 says God's people would come ***under attack*** and ***siege***. This could be a reference to the attack of Assyria when Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem in 701 BC, but it more likely refers to the coming siege by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 588-586 BC. Jerusalem would be spared the former attack, but the latter one would devastate Jerusalem and lead the people into exile. The enemies of God's people would not only attack the city but would humiliate its leaders by ***striking the judge of Israel on the cheek with a rod***. This was a gesture of contempt (see 1 Kings 22:24; Job 16:10). This could have been a prophecy of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, who was captured in Jericho while fleeing from the Babylonians. His sons were put to death before him, then his eyes were put out so that this was the last

thing he saw (2 Kings 25:1-7). This was a period of utter humiliation for Judah. All hope appeared gone.

From one of the least likely places, **Bethlehem •Ephrathah**, God was about to send His Messiah to reverse the fortunes of His people and send a better David, who would establish the line of the former king forever. This person would be the **ruler over Israel**, not just Judah but the entirety of God's people. His origin was said to be **from antiquity** and **from ancient times**. The use of the term **ancient times** indicate His origin was in eternity, meaning that this Messiah was not only man but also God.

Israel would be **abandoned until the time when she who is in labor has given birth**. Some see in this a reference to Mary and the virgin birth of Christ, while others believe that the woman represents the remnant of Israel from which Messiah was born. The Messianic period was characterized by the return of the remnant.

What is the significance of this promised deliverer being born in a humble setting?

VERSES 4-6

The Messiah, Jesus, **will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the LORD**. He Himself will be their **peace** or *shalom* (see Eph. 2:14). This means more than the absence of war. It connotes both external and internal satisfaction and sufficiency. Jesus would provide the ultimate victory for Israel over its enemies. The land of **Nimrod**, mentioned in verse 6, was a reference to a person in Genesis 10:8-11 who inhabited the land of Mesopotamia. The Assyrians were not the only enemy Israel would face from that region. The Babylonians would soon ascend to power, but the Messiah would offer protection from all the enemies of Israel.

In a world where people are measured by their might, this ruler mentioned by Micah was different. He came from a small, insignificant location. He was known more as a shepherd than a warrior. This humble ruler would shepherd God's people, instituting peace throughout the whole earth and would rescue the people of

Israel from their invaders by securing the land. Israel would need to hold to this message of hope as dark days descended on the horizon.

THEN THE REMNANT (MICAH 5:7-9)

⁷ Then the remnant of Jacob will be among many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which do not wait for anyone or linger for mankind. ⁸ Then the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, among many peoples, like a lion among animals of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which tramples and tears as it passes through, and there is no one to rescue them. ⁹ Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, and all your enemies will be destroyed.

VERSE 7

God would establish a remnant from among the scattered exiles. This would be a double-edged sword, as it would mean salvation to some and judgment to others. For some, the **remnant of Jacob** would be **like dew from the LORD** or **like showers on the grass**. Moisture of any kind was welcome in the land of Israel, bringing refreshment and renewal. The remnant would refresh the land as God established them again in the promised land. Neither dew nor rain were controlled by humans but were sent by the providence of God. This is seen in the words, **which do not wait for anyone or linger for mankind**.

The descendants of Abraham would finally fulfill their purpose in being a blessing to the nations (see Gen. 12:1-3). Further, just as the dew and the rain come independent of human manipulation, so these magnificent events would happen by the gracious hand of God and not by human effort.

VERSES 8-9

In addition to dew and rain, Micah compared the remnant to a **lion among animals of the forest**. They would be powerful among the **nations** and the **peoples** of the world. Like a lion overcoming His prey, the remnant would destroy the foes of Israel in the power of the Lord. Peace and security would come to the people of God, but it would come through their obedience as the remnant returned and took its place in God's story.

The gospel is a double-edged sword to those who believe and those who do not believe. For the person who believes, eternal life is given and abundant life on earth is promised (John 3:16; 10:10). It is not so for the unbeliever. Those who perish outside of faith in Christ must expect judgment and eternal separation from God. Those outside of the faith will be thrust into a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (see Luke 13:28). The double-edged sword divides believers from unbelievers, bringing salvation to some but judgment to others.

The message of salvation can either bring refreshment like dew or the judgment of a lion's attack. The linchpin that decides which way a person will experience God is whether that person trusts Jesus. Has he or she repented of sin and turned to Christ? Or is he or she persisting in unbelief?

Paul expressed this double-edged idea in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, "For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved, and among those who are perishing. To some we are the aroma of death leading to death, but to others, an aroma of life leading to life. Who is adequate for these things?" Let's let the fragrance of Christ fill our lives and fill this world.

What is the difference between those who receive God's blessings and those who receive His wrath?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Last Things*

The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord.
(See Isaiah 2:4; 2 Timothy 4:8.)

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can find hope in God's promise of salvation.
- Believers can experience God's peace through faith in Jesus.
- All people must decide to trust God.

Discuss as a group how sharing the gospel creates a watershed event for those who stand between salvation and judgment. How can this message be shared without being judgmental?

**How do the promises listed by Micah bring you peace and security?
To what extent are you being obedient to God and His promises?
What actions do you need to take in anticipation of the promises given?**

PRAYER NEEDS