

Micah 4:1-5:5 • God's Unexpected Way of Working

Introduction

One of the ironic things about the way God works is that it's often misunderstood – or at least not **fully** understood – by **EITHER** party, those being judged as well as those being saved. Just as the people of Noah's time could not understand the judgment of the great flood, neither did Noah fully understand God's plan of salvation to come through that event. Israel and Egypt had quite differing views as to what God was doing in His bringing Israel out of captivity to their own land, yet neither seemed to "get it". Examples go on and on of neither side quite understanding precisely how God used them or to what He would ultimately bring about. Those who thought they were the winners and those believing themselves to be the losers often found those roles switched over time as God revealed His complete will. Is your faith based on how things feel at the moment, or on the One who ultimately works all things out according to His will?

¹And 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.

²Many 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.

³And He will judge between many
peoples
And render decisions for mighty, distant
nations.

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.

⁴Each 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.

⁵Though all the peoples walk
Each in the name of his god,
As for us, we will walk
In the name of the LORD our God forever
and ever.

[Read v.1-5]

Q: In the first 3 chapters of Micah, God established the grounds for judgment of the whole of Israel. What does He establish in this chapter?

A: The restoration of Israel.

Q: What will be specifically established within Israel according to these verses?

A: The "house of the LORD" will be established in Jerusalem, becoming the capital and center of the entire world.

Q: What will be the main attraction of the re-established "house of the God of Jacob"?

- "His ways"
- "His paths"
- "the law"
- "the word of the LORD"

Everyone will not just learn but **apply** His Word to their life.

Q: How will things be drastically different once life on earth is established according to God's Word and ways?

- Christ will be the Judge of all things.
- Peace will be the standard so that military weapons, training, and organizations will completely vanish.
- Contentment will be enjoyed by every individual.
- All personal needs will be met.
- In other words, all physical needs will be satisfied.

Q: What will be the ultimate, spiritual result of Christ's work and reign on earth?

A: "...we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever." In a word, faithfulness: All spiritual needs will be satisfied.

Point: God begins by describing what the end result is going to be – living according to His Word as opposed to how the world now lives – before illuminating how He will accomplish it.

⁶“In that day,” declares the LORD,
“I will assemble the lame
And gather the outcasts,
Even those whom I have afflicted.

⁷I will make the lame a remnant
And the outcasts a strong nation,
And the LORD will reign over them in
Mount Zion

From now on and forever.

⁸As for you, tower of the flock,
Hill of the daughter of Zion,
To you it will come—
Even the former dominion will come,
The kingdom of the daughter of
Jerusalem.

⁹“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?

¹⁰Writhe 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.

There you will be rescued;
There the LORD will redeem you
From the hand of your enemies.

¹¹And now many nations have been
assembled against you

Who say, ‘Let her be polluted,
And let our eyes gloat over Zion.’

¹²But 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.

¹³Arise 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.

^{5:1}“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.

[Read v.6-5:1]

Q: How does the description of Israel as a “lame” remnant contrast to the opening verses concerning restoration to God’s Word?

A: The word “lame” signifies someone who walks sideways; it describes those who deviate from the ways of God. To be healed of lameness in this context is to be restored to obedience to God’s Word and ways.

Q: According to v.7, when did this happen?

A: It has not occurred yet, but is yet to come. This is what we have come to call Christ’s “Millennial Reign”. (See Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:14, 27; Luke 1:32-33; Revelation 11:15.)

Q: In v.8, what does a “tower” have to do with shepherding?

A: In ancient times, for a particularly large flock and pasture, a tower was built from which to oversee and guard them. It’s a reference to Israel’s eventual role of shepherd/overseer of the nations represented as the flock. It’s a picture of God’s Word being taught and handed down throughout Christ’s entire kingdom.

Point: *The establishment of Christ’s kingdom begins with establishment of His Word. Is this how you expected the kingdom to begin?*

Q: What is the symbolism of a woman in labor actually teaching?

A: Although there is great rejoicing at the birth of a child, it comes with a price of painful consequences. They will eventually rejoice at God’s restoration, but must pay the price for their sin in the mean time..

Q: What is the significance of “dwell in the field”?

A: Whereas a city was generally a fortified place of greater safety, an open field affords no such protection.

Q: What will be the “pain of childbirth” – the consequences of their sin? Why is this quite remarkable coming from Micah?

A: They will be captives in Babylon. This is remarkable because during Micah’s time the dominant power was Assyria. God allowed Micah to look beyond the present to the distant future.

Point: *God’s judgment may have begun by using Assyria against the northern kingdom called “Samaria” by Micah, but the complete work of judgment against the whole of Israel would be accomplished by Babylon who was yet to rise to prominence. It was not Assyria that was used as expected during Micah’s time, but Babylon to come.*

Q: On the one hand, v.9-10 explains how Israel doesn’t understand how God is working for their ultimate restoration. How do v.11-12 explain how all the other nations don’t actually understand how God is working for their ultimate judgment?

A: They “gloat” over Israel’s temporary fall, believing that God’s judgment of Israel has led to a permanent separation between God and His people. However, they don’t understand His ultimate purposes whereby He’ll use these events to not only bring about the restoration of His people, but judgment of the very nations.

[Continued on the next page.]

Micah 4:1-5:5 • God’s Unexpected Way of Working, Page 2 of 4

²But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
 From you One will go forth for Me to be
 ruler in Israel.
 His goings forth are from long ago,
 From the days of eternity.”
³Therefore He will give them up until the
 time
 When she who is in labor has borne a
 child.
 Then the remainder of His brethren
 Will return to the sons of Israel.
⁴And He will arise and shepherd His flock
 In the strength of the LORD,
 In the majesty of the name of the LORD
 His God.
 And they will remain,
 Because at that time He will be great
 To the ends of the earth.
^{5a}This One will be our peace.

Q: How is v.13 somewhat ironic when compared to Israel’s own judgment?

A: Whereas these nations were used by God to exact His judgment on Israel, Israel’s restoration will result in them being turned into God’s tool of judgment on those very nations, and ultimately their restoration.

Point: Just as neither side properly understands God’s purposes of judgment of Israel and the role of the nations in it, neither do they properly understand Israel’s role in the restoration of God’s kingdom and the role of the nations in it.

Q: Against whom does v.5:1 reveal the real battle is being waged?

A: The real battle is being waged against Christ, the “judge of Israel”. In reality, the physical warfare to take place on earth is a reflection of their spiritual warfare.

Point: Neither side seems to understand that what is taking place physically is a reflection of what is happening spiritually.

[Read v.5:2-5a]

Q: Why does Bethlehem have “Ephrathah” appended to its name?

A: There were actually 2 towns called “Bethlehem”, one in Zebulun and the other in Judah. This identifies the one in Judah outside of Jerusalem where Christ was born.

Q: What is the meaning of “too little to be among the clans”?

A: The land was apportioned down to the thousands, over which a leader was appointed. Bethlehem was so small that it was not listed in Joshua’s conquest of Canaan and subsequently incurred no need for a leader. It’s quite ironic when one considers that the **ultimate** Leader will come from there.

Q: How do we know from v.2 that the Messiah is not just an earthly leader like, say, Moses, but divine in nature, the very Son of God?

A: “His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity”. This is the strongest possible way for the Hebrew language to state that although the Messiah will come in the form of a man, He is equal to God and formed from eternity.

Point: God chose to effect His will through sending His Son in the flesh, yet still retaining His divine nature.

Q: Although God sends the Messiah to Israel, what happens to them?

A: Because they reject Him at His First Coming, He “will give them up” for a time, symbolized by the price of childbirth which must be paid before the arrival of a child as previously alluded to. They will finally accept Him at His Second Coming.

Point: What Israel has struggled with throughout history and even to this day is that it is One Messiah and two comings. They expect the Messiah to come just once, but He is not working according to their expectations, and they are therefore paying a price until they conform to His.

Q: When will Israel be restored to God’s kingdom through the Messiah?

A: When they accept Him at His Second Coming. There is no peace without the Prince of Peace.

Overall Application

The nations of Assyria and Babylon, supported by many other nations, did not understand the role they were playing first in God's judgment of them, and later of Israel's restoration back to the land and its relationship with God. This error was repeated by the Greek kingdoms of the Intertestamental period of the Macabees, Jesus' time by the Romans, and will have a final, ultimate fulfillment in the End Times.

- *If neither side fully understands God's whole will and purpose and how He will bring it about, what is the lesson for God's working in our life?*
- *What is the lesson for us in how we should seek to understand God's working in general?*
- *Why are even the most dire of circumstances not a good way to measure what God is doing?*