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.
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[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 not only bring about the restoration of His people, but judgment of the very nations.

[Continued on the next page.]
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.

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?