

## **The Future Christ Secures (Micah 4)**

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**April 10, 2022**

“Are we there yet?” How many parents in this room have heard those words? How many adult children in this room have said those words? I’ve tried all sorts of responses as a dad, some less effective than others. We’ll get there when we get there. If you ask one more time, you’ll lose dessert. Why don’t you read a book? Or let’s play the alphabet game!

You might get a few miles out of threats or distractions. But they don’t work for long. They don’t bring enduring joy on a long section of 168 enroute to the Outer Banks. I think the challenge of long car rides with kids illustrates a struggle that is common to man. When your present situation feels bleak or hopeless, when the blessing you long to experience is slow in coming, it’s hard to persevere. It’s hard to keep going.

Micah 4 opens on the heels of one of the bleakest and most discouraging announcements in the entire book. Mic 3:12, “Therefore because of you,” because of the wicked prophets, priests, and kings ruling in Israel and the social injustice the people practiced as a result, “Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.”

The Lord isn’t a grandfather who sweeps things under the rug. He doesn’t turn a blind eye to sin, oppression, or the spiritual adultery from which they flow. You will not escape his judgment, Micah warns. The city you thought would never be conquered will be completely destroyed. Because you were unwilling to turn from your sin, you will no longer be God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule. You will suffer the shame of exile in a foreign land.

But that didn’t mean God was finished with having a people for his own possession. Micah 3 ends with imminent judgment. But it’s not the only event on the horizon. The Lord is a God of justice. But he’s also a God of mercy. And in Micah 4 he lifts Israel’s eyes and the eyes of every weary saint languishing in the sorrows of a broken world, and whispers, “Take heart, child. It’s not how the story ends. Redemption is coming. Salvation is on its way. Don’t grow weary. Don’t lose heart.



Hold fast to the promise of future grace for there you will discover strength to persevere, strength to obey and keep on obeying until the day I bring you home.”

Like a good father equipping his children for a long car ride, the Lord turns their attention to the final destination. He directs their thoughts to the joy awaiting them at the beach, to the blessings they will enjoy, to the waves they will ride, to the sandcastles they will build, to the games they will play, to the food they will eat, all because of his glorious grace.

The sorrows of this life compel the people of God in every age to cry out, “Are we there yet? How long, O Lord?” The Father replies by reminding us that life with him is worth the wait, worth the sacrifice, worth the tears, worth the pain of taking up your cross to follow the Son. **Present obedience is sustained by the promise of future grace.**

The divinely intended effect of Mic 4:1-8 is found in v. 5. “For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.” If we’re going to join their company, we must remember two things, my friends. We’ll spend most of our time on the first.

### **1) THE FUTURE OF GOD’S PEOPLE IS EXCEEDINGLY GLORIOUS (vv. 1-4)**

The contrast between what happens to the Jerusalem or “the mountain of the house of the LORD” in 3:12 and 4:1 is striking. In 3:12, Micah says it will become “a heap of ruins” and a “wooded height.” But in v. 1 he points to an even further day, to “the latter days,” when Jerusalem will be “established as the highest of the mountains” and “lifted up above the hills.”

What does elevation represent in Scripture? It’s a metaphor for glory, splendor, and supremacy. What does Jerusalem represent? The city where God dwells in the midst of his people. So what’s Micah saying in v. 1? That in the “latter days,” God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule will be exalted in the eyes of the world. Yahweh will be supremely glorified above every rival, every false god, and Israel will be glorified in him.

And when Jerusalem’s fortunes are reversed, how will the surrounding nations respond? Where people once fled from her into exile, the tide will run in the

opposite direction. V. 2, "People shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.'"

Gentiles are flocking to Jerusalem to join the people of God, hungry for two things. First, to learn who God is and what He's done (to understand his ways). Second, to obey him accordingly (to walk in his paths). Peoples and nations who have for centuries been far off will be brought near. A new spiritual desire in their hearts will compel them to know and follow the Lord.

What's Micah talking about? He's pointing forward to the work of salvation God began doing 700 years later when he sent his Son, Jesus, into the world to save sinners. The promises in vv. 1-2 are fulfilled through the work Christ accomplished on the cross for the new covenant people of God. Listen to how Paul describes the church in Eph 2:18-22 with the same language Micah uses to describe the city of God in Micah 4.

"For through him we both (Jew and Gentile alike) have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

On this side of the cross, the people of God are no longer defined ethnically. They consist of all who hold fast to Christ in repentance and faith and are numbered as members of his body, the church. And the dwelling place of God is no longer a physical temple in Jerusalem. He takes up residence within his people through the power of the Spirit, manifesting his presence in a powerful way whenever we gather to glorify him and edify one another.

Through the church, God makes himself known. Through the church, people from every tribe and tongue learn who God is and what it means to follow him. And it all happens through the transforming power of the Word of God! Look at the end of v. 2. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."



What is “the word of the LORD” God has commissioned us to declare, KingsWay? It’s the word of the gospel, the good news of Jesus and all he’s done to bring sinners like us home to God. The gospel is the operative agent, the life-changing power, that causes hearts that are dead to God to come alive with affection for the Savior. We don’t have any power to make anyone desire to know and follow Jesus. But the Word does and the Word will! Our job is to speak it and let the Word do what only it can do.

And I’m not just talking about what happens on Sunday morning when I’m preaching. I’m talking about what happens in a thousand ways throughout the week as every member of our body is faithful to speak the truth in love. Eph 3:10-11, “So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Are we of little account by the world’s standards? Yes. Are we a very small part of what God is doing all over the world? Yes. But what the Lord is accomplishing in us and through us could not be more glorious! Through all our shortcomings and failings, he’s using us to proclaim his excellencies. He’s using us to draw lost men and women to himself from every people and nation. What comes to your mind when you think of the church, friend? Take care that you never consider as ordinary what God has declared is supernatural.

Yet even as we consider how Mic 4:1-2 are being fulfilled today through the local church, our hearts long for more, don’t they? Yes, the gospel is going forth through the church in many nations, Namibia included. But does the entire world see the church as glorious? Established as the highest of the mountains? Lifted up above the hills? Not yet. Why not? Because the fulfillment of vv. 1-2 is both already and not yet. And the “not yet” awaits the day Jesus returns for his bride.

Rev 21:9-11, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, it’s radiance like a most rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.”

That day’s coming, brothers and sisters. And when it does, vv. 3-4 will finally come to pass in all their fullness. “He (King Jesus) shall judge between many peoples, and

shall decide for strong nations far away..." The Lord will make himself known as the perfectly just and faithful judge even the best leaders, the best rulers, and the best pastors, inevitably fail to be. And his righteous judgements don't just stem the tide of human sin and suffering. They bring a complete end to it!

V. 3, "...And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore..." What a day that will be, my friends! Ralph Davis is right. "People and nations do not produce this state of affairs by their own efforts, or brilliance, or exhaustion. Rather, Yahweh imposes his just rule and because of that, nations exist in peace."

So what will replace the strife of war? V. 4, "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree." On both a corporate "they" level and an individual "every man" level, material prosperity and abundance will be the norm. No more famine, deprivation, poverty, eviction, or oppression. In the new heavens and the new earth, all of God's people will experience an abundance of physical blessing reflecting his original creation in the Garden of Eden.

And as if that's not enough, Micah adds "no one shall make them afraid." Can you imagine what that will be like, my friends? The very threat, the very possibility, of human oppression and injustice will be completely eradicated! No alarm systems or security companies. No concealed carry permits. No civil rights cases. No crime reports. The specter of suffering completely gone. The future of God's people is exceedingly glorious!

Does it seem like a fairytale? Does it seem too good to be true? It's not make-believe or wishful thinking. Every promise in vv. 1-4 is guaranteed by the infallible Word of God. V. 4, "For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken." Yahweh's sovereign signature is on the page. Therefore, it will surely come to pass.

## **2) OUR REDEEMER KING WILL SURELY BRING IT TO PASS (vv. 5-8)**

Is the fact God has made a promise enough for you? Is that where your confidence for the future lies? What guarantees a preferable future in your mind? Is it the work you're doing or someone else is doing? Or is it the work God is doing? Present joy in future grace is reserved for those who know and believe the promises of God.

V. 5, "For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever."

As Micah surveys the surrounding nations along with his faithless countrymen, what does he see? Their path in life, all the choices they make, reflects the object of their worship. They're walking or living "in the name" of their chosen savior, their false gods. In contrast, what do the true people of God do, even before the future God has promised us comes to pass? We live in the present in a way that reflects our hope and confidence is in the Lord.

We're all walking in the name of some god, which is another way of saying to be human is to be a worshiper. Every moment of your life you are worshiping something. Your friends are worshiping something. Your kids are worshiping something. You are looking to something or someone to give you hope for the future, even if that person or thing is failing you miserably such that you have no hope at all!

If you're unsure what that person or thing is, simply ask, "What robs my joy in the present?" If losing money robs your joy, money has become your hope for the future. If losing the approval of a friend robs your joy, your friend has become your hope for the future. If your children misbehaving robs your joy, your kids have become your hope for the future. If not getting everything done that you planned on getting done robs your joy, your work has become your hope for the future.

Here's the bottom line, brothers and sisters. Neither you nor any other mere man or woman can make all that is wrong in the world right. That doesn't mean we don't advocate for justice. It does mean we refuse to saddle ourselves or someone other than God with a responsibility that belongs to God and God alone. It's God's job to make everything sad untrue. It's our job to trust and obey him until he does.

And remembering the goodness and glory of the future God is bringing to pass is what enables us to persevere in trusting and obeying him in the present! 2 Pe 3:11-13, "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

Present obedience is sustained by the promise of future grace. Our task, our calling, is to live the kind of holy and dependent life in the present that's consistent with the future God has prepared for us. Look at v. 6. "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..." He promises to restore those who were about to suffer the discipline of exile in Babylon.

Friends, the discipline of the Lord always has a redemptive end in view, not just back then, but today. Take heart in that, especially when you, like Israel, are suffering the consequences of your sin. Don't begrudge them with worldly sorrow. Allow them to drive you back to the Lord. Why? Because the restoring mercy and grace of God is just as real as the sorrow of your sin. And for the Christian, it is the mercy and grace of God that will ultimately prevail in your life.

God isn't done with Israel even though she's about to experience the devastation of exile on account of her persistent sin. V. 7, "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." Talk about a reversal of fortunes! It's what the Bible means when it describes the Lord as our Redeemer. He takes the spiritually crippled and makes them a chosen remnant. He takes those who are despised in the eyes of the world and make them pillars in the house of God.

And he is faithful to redeem not just here and there, but "forevermore." I love John Calvin's reflection on the last word in v. 7. "Micah does not say that God will reign only for a day, or for a brief time, but forever. For if we thought that, after helping us today, God would withdraw tomorrow, and leave us in doubt as to when he might ever help us again, what sort of consolation would that be? Even if God should help us for a season or two, but we should not know about the future, we would still gain nothing. But when God assures us that his assistance will last to the very end, indeed without end, and that in life and in death we shall feel his protection and safekeeping, what greater assurance could we want?"

Friend, the world might look at you and say, "What a wreck." You are lamer than lame. You wasted your life. You blew your chances. Game over. God say, "Is anything too difficult for me?" He takes what is dead and makes it alive. He takes

the weak and makes them strong. Don't look at your past or what you have become and say, "Oh well, I guess that's the trajectory of my life." Look to the Lord! Micah doesn't direct Israel's attention to a future day when she finally gets her spiritual act together. He directs her attention (and ours) to the faithfulness of God.

Under the kings of old, men like David and Solomon, Israel enjoyed dominion and authority over the surrounding nations. Micah ends in v. 8 by declaring that after the sorrow of exile, Jerusalem will be exalted once again. A king will rise to power in her midst. The next section in Micah 5 reveals his name is Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, the dominion, the present and future reign God offers us is not a take back Washington thing. It's a King Jesus thing. If you have embraced the obedience of faith in v. 5, know this. No matter who is seated or unseated on the Supreme Court, you are already seated with Jesus in the heavenly places! You share in his triumph and authority. We are conquerors in Christ, enjoying the spoils of his victory over the evil powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

As Paul rejoices in Eph 1:21-23, the Father has seated the Son "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." As members of his body, we reign with him now in part. One day, we will reign with him in full- not because we deserve it, but because our Redeemer King will surely bring it to pass.

## **CONCLUSION**

On the days you find yourself saying again and again, "Lord, are we there yet?" Micah 4 exhorts us to remember two things. The future of God's people is exceedingly glorious, and our Redeemer King will surely bring it to pass. That promise of future grace is what sustains our present obedience, brothers and sisters.

For this we know. No labor of love, no death to self, no sacrifice to follow Jesus, no choice when no one else is watching to "walk in the name of the LORD our God" is ever in vain. Following Jesus is always worth it! A glorious future awaits all who do. If you are in Christ, Micah 4 is not a description of what you might experience if you





make all the right choices. Micah 4 is a promise from the God who has ordained the end of your story from the beginning and is writing every chapter along the way.

So do not doubt. Do not fear. It's his work and he will bring it to completion. May that promise, that future grace, compel our obedience and protect our joy as we run down the path that leads us home. Let's pray.