

Study 3 Micah 4:1-5:15

Back to *the Future*

One of the marks of a true prophet of the Old Testament period was that he spoke of judgment against the Lord's people in response to their rebellious ways against God. And it's also true of the prophet, that their message contained encouragement and hope. God's plan for his people is always full of hope and for their ultimate good.



His end goal is to bring his people to a point of maturity, expressed in the Old Testament as having the Law written on the hearts (*"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." Jeremiah 31:33*), and in the New Testament as being conformed to the likeness of Christ (*"We proclaim Christ, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" Colossians 1:28*).

These goals of God are a fulfillment of a promise. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-6

In our last study we saw a brief glimpse of God's plans for the future.

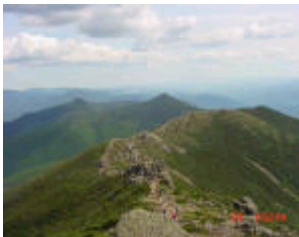
Re-read Micah 2:12-13.

In chapters 4 & 5, Micah lays out the details in a bold and stunning way. His vision in these chapters seem to leap back and forth in time. Consequently, like all of the book, this section is difficult to organise, yet it does have a common thread that ties it together. And that's the theme of renewed hope for the future.

So let's turn back to Micah as we look forward to our future in God.

Read Micah 4:1-8

The Highs



Micah's look into the future was like he was gazing at range after range of mountains. It's as though each new range represents a different time. The first represents the near future, yet to be experienced by the prophet and those of his time. The next range might be the Gospel age. The next might be the time of Christ's second coming, with the next representing Eternity.

In encouraging the faithful to persevere, what sort of future does Micah's prophecy reveal?

What do these verses reveal about:

a) the 'temple' of God (Food for thought - "as chief among the nations" cf 1Cor3:16-17)

b) the conditions of the time

c) the condition of the remnant (vv6-8). [Note the 'future' language with the phrase "in that day" of verse 6. It's *also a reminder of a past time* when exile was predicted. Read Deuteronomy 4:25-31, especially noting verse 30, "later days", last days.]

Read Micah 4:9-5:1

The Lows

Low times for God's people often led them along the road to restoration. The lows begin, and are linked together with the word "now", emphasizing a present condition. Although the NIV Bible leaves the word out of 5:1 in the original text, Micah uses it to begin the verse.

It also appears in 4:9,10, & 11.

The word "now" traces the path that God takes his people from from the seeming hopelessness of a siege and exile, to their future deliverance.

What do these verses reveal about the condition of Israel's imminent future? (4:9-12)

List the things from Micah 4 that say something about God' character, noting the verse references?

Micah 5:7-15

These verses contain two oracles, or revelations that Micah brings before the people. The first oracle is about what the remnant will do. Read 5:7-9.

There are three participants in the oracle. "The Lord", "the remnant of Jacob", and "the nations" or "many peoples". What is the relationship between them?

What role is assigned to the remnant people of God when they know his salvation?

In verse 8 there appears to be a role reversal. Gone is the image of Israel as gentle rain and dewdrops. Describe Israel's new role.

The second oracle is about what the Lord will do. Read 5:10-15 Again, it has a 'deja vu' sound to it. What would the people have been reminded of? (For those who want to be stretched a little, some good background reading is Deuteronomy 4:25-31 & 6:4-9) (For those who want to be stretched further read Deuteronomy chapters 4-6 & 30)

List the things the Lord will do from Micah 5:10-15.

Micah, in his vision, saw the people in great pain because they were without an effective king (4:9), and the one they have will be humiliated (5:1). However, Micah then presents a startling contrast to the picture he's just painted of their present king. Bethlehem, the birthplace of Israel's most famous and most loved King David, will once again 'give birth' to royalty, .."one who will be ruler over all Israel." (Note that Micah doesn't use the word king. But because of the association between Bethlehem and ruler, kingship is implied

Read 5:2-6

The prophecy of Micah 5:2-6 is one of those instances when the prophet is peering at more than one mountain range. His prophecy won't be totally fulfilled until the final judgment day when Christ returns. In the meantime, Micah's prophecy focuses on the nearer mountain range of Jesus' first coming. For example, it's known that there was a period of around 400 years, between the last prophecy of Malachi (the last prophet in the Old Testament period), and the coming of the next prophet, in John the Baptist. The reference in Micah 5:3, "Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in birth ...", which could be taken as a reference to the birth of Jesus, or to that of John the Baptist.

Look up Micah 5:2-6 with Matthew 2:1; John 10:14-16, 27. How does each passage describe the Shepherd?

Shepherd he might be, but what words in Micah 5:4,5 hint of a king?

Reflect....

There are many troubles all around us as this study is being written. Yet God remains sovereign over all, and has already sent His Deliverer (Micah 5:6), the same "ruler (5:1) ...shepherd (5:4)and peace[maker] (5:5)" that Micah spoke of.

As 'followers of Jesus' we believe these things. God has given us a Real Hope in Christ that goes beyond this life. Yet in many ways, living in Australia in relative peace and prosperity has meant that our world is far removed from that of Micah's time. So what would you say to the suggestion that we are somewhat anaesthetised, on automatic pilot, and in danger of becoming indifferent towards God, just like his people in Micah's time?

It was crisis time for Micah's listener's. What sort of crisis would it take to remind you of your dependence on God?

In the midst of doom and gloom Micah spoke of, and portrayed hope. Read 1Peter 3:15. This verse assumes we have hope and are portraying it like Micah. (a) Where does it assume that our hope comes from? (b) If you're not portraying a hope that attracts people's attention, what's holding you back? (c) How is it possible to portray hope in God, if [i] you're 'young in your faith'; and if [ii] a person feels 'less than perfect' as a believer? Explain.

(a)
(b)

(c)[i]

[ii]

In the face of, wars, famine, greed, poverty, disease and death; sadness, loneliness, rampant debt and unemployment; with ever-increasing numbers of marriages and families under pressure, *in what ways have you been preparing yourself* “..to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”?

When things are falling apart for you or for those around you, are you still able to declare your trust, confidence and hope in God?



If your response was yes, from the list above [wars.....families under pressure] choose one thing and write a brief response to it.

