

November 17

Scriptures: Read Micah 3, 4 & 5

Key Verse: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, ... out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel...” (Micah 5:2)

Overview

In pointing out the sins which were leading to the downfall of both Israel and Judah, Micah lays much guilt upon the political and religious leaders of the people. They did not fulfill their obligation to care for the people’s spiritual and physical needs. Rather they abused and oppressed them, took bribes which perverted justice, and shed innocent blood; all this stemmed from their greed. Micah compares their wicked conduct to the way a cannibal deals with his victims (3:2-3). They were also self-deceived to think that God was among them and heard their prayers. They were soon to learn that God shows no partiality or favoritism.

Even the so-called prophets, whose job it was to voice God’s messages and draw the people closer to Him, were saying things to merely please the populace, especially the leaders (who would pay them for prophesying what they were told to say). By so doing, these “prophets” were driving the people further from God and encouraging their wickedness, thus adding to their own sins. Micah prophesies, however, that they would be proven false and be put to shame (3:5-7, 11). In contrast, Micah declares himself to be a true prophet who is empowered by the Spirit of the Lord and who fulfills his task of declaring the rebellion and sin of the people of Judah and Israel (3:8). With this declaration, Micah continues his prophecy with even greater boldness. He foretells of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (3:12; cf. Jer. 26:18). Such a prophecy likely caused the people much dismay, for they wrongly believed that God would always defend His chosen city and His dwelling place at the Temple.

Although the present, imperfect and defiled Temple was to be ruined, Micah gave them hope in prophesying about the establishment of the Lord’s exalted dwelling in the latter days (ch. 4). In the span of only a few verses, and without any introduction, Micah’s prophecy shifts from the present time to the near future and then to the distant future (“the latter days” denoting the Messianic era; 4:1-8; cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Hos. 3:5). The latter days refer to either the present age in which we are now living (cf. Heb. 1:2; Acts 2:16-17) or, as it appears here, the very last days of our present age (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3). After the Messiah returns to earth, His Kingdom, which has begun in the hearts of believers, will be fully realized and established. It will be a wonderful era of peace, ruled over by the Messiah King Jesus. All nations will be governed by Him and many nations will truly seek Him. He will teach them His Holy Word and they will determine to walk in His ways. Those who “walk in the name of the Lord our God” shall have eternal peace (4:5).

In describing those who become inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, Micah pictures “the lame” and “the outcast”. It appears that the lame are the faithful remnant of Judah and Israel who have come through the Lord’s judgment (Rom. 11:5). The “outcast” may refer to the larger number of Gentile believers who were excluded from fellowship with God in the Old Covenant. In the

Millennial Kingdom, however, both will reside in perfect unity, being watched over by the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd (4:8; 5:4).

The prophet interrupts his message of the Messianic hope to consider the future captivity of the people of Judah by the Babylonians, though at that time Babylon was not a threat, nor even a powerful nation. Along with prophesying the captivity, Micah also predicted that Judah would be delivered (redeemed) by the Lord when they returned to their land (4:10). In Micah's day, however, the threat upon Judah was from Assyria and her vassal nations. In coming against Judah, Assyria was doing the will of God, but they did "not know the thoughts of the Lord", who had purposed to save Jerusalem. Micah predicted that God would intervene and give the Assyrians into their hands, which He did right outside the walls of Jerusalem (4:11-13; cf. 2 Kings 18:17, 25; 19:32-36).

Once again, Micah jumps from predicting the immediate future to predicting the start of the Messianic age. He gives the precise and amazing prophecy about the Messiah's birthplace in Bethlehem Ephrathah (located about 9 KM southwest of Jerusalem; a specification given so it would not be confused with the Bethlehem of Galilee). The prophecy makes clear that this One who was to come was not a created being — His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (5:2; John 1:1, 14). After the blessed virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, then the true remnant of those Jews (Jesus' brethren) who believed in Him would become a part of the spiritual Israel (5:3).

Micah returns again to describe the Messiah Jesus' universal righteous reign which will bring peace to the hearts of all those who are of His sheepfold (5:4, 5a). He will deliver His people from their enemies (represented here by Assyria; 5:5-6), and empower them to be victorious for the short period of time that they are in the midst of their enemies (5:7-9). He will destroy the weapons of warfare and all military fortifications so that there will be no more war (5:10-11). He will purge the earth of the abominations of witchcraft and cults, and He will turn His vengeance against those who have not heeded His message (5:12-15). What a powerful warning for us to heed the Word of God!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You have set the captives free. You heal the brokenhearted. You bring us deliverance. Free us into liberty, we pray. Thank You for Your bountiful goodness to us!