

“Receiving God’s Eternal Peace”

Micah 4:1-5

God’s peace is revealed through those who acknowledge His victory presently.

Make God Your Treasure

Train for Righteousness

Walk in God’s Presence

Make God Your Treasure

Micah 4:1-2, NKJV

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days

That the mountain of the Lord’s house

Shall be established on the top of the mountains,

And shall be exalted above the hills;

And peoples shall flow to it.

Many nations shall come and say,

“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

To the house of the God of Jacob;

He will teach us His ways,

And we shall walk in His paths.”

For out of Zion the law shall go forth,

And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The writing of the prophets sounds strange to people when they read them. The poetic language is very different from the prose that much of the Bible is written in. It causes people to be confused about time and location. Most people simply avoid the minor prophets completely since most of what they have to say is poetic doom and gloom.

Ignoring these parts of God’s Word is really a travesty and doing an injustice to understanding all of what God has said to encourage and warn those who trust in Him as Almighty God. Micah has much to say about the coming of the Messiah and His reign upon the earth that can be great encouragement in times when it feels like evil is winning the fight in the world. The current passage of Scripture is a prime example of the hidden encouragement many of the minor prophets hold for those who take the time to study them.

This portion of Scripture begins with, “*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days...*” The time being referred to here is future rather than of the time in which Micah was inspired to write these words. The Hebrew word translated *latter days* is *’ah^ariy^t* which means the end, last time, latter time (ISBN: 9780899576671, pg. 39). There are many who refer to the times we are living in presently as the end times or the latter days. In some sense that is true, yet in another sense, history still has a long way to go.

Much of those who fill the pews on Sunday mornings across the United States give little if any consideration to prophecies given in the Bible. Their concern is based on immediate social justice issues, fundraising to counter balance the lack of tithing in the body of Christ, and promoting their image in the community to attract people. The idea of being Christ-like in their daily routines, preparing themselves and others for eternity is

the farthest thing from their minds, let alone having any kind of enthusiasm about the return of the Lord.

Jesus made it clear that there would always be poor in the world (Mark 14:3-9). There are countless opportunities daily for people to help those who are less fortunate, but the window of sharing the Gospel message of Christ is one that is closing with each passing day (Matthew 24:29-31, 36-44). The idea of the rapture of the Church from the world is not universally accepted among Christians. Even those who believe God will be taking the Church out of the world differ on when that time will actually happen. The important thing to remember is no one knows when Jesus is returning, but He is returning because He promised that He would (John 14:1-3). Whether we leave the world in the rapture of the Church or leave by simply dying, there is only a limited amount of time to share Jesus with others.

Many believers proclaim they are not evangelists. Jesus called everyone who believes in Him to be a disciple maker though. We need to be helping others in their walk with the Lord and demonstrating what a life lived for God looks like in words and actions as things are dealt with throughout the day. It is critical that God's people are living for more than today or the coming week, but preparing themselves and others for eternity which everyone will eventually be living in at some point.

In this passage the Lord's house on the mountain top will be exalted and people will flow to it. This is something that would only be true during the millennial reign of Christ spoken of in Revelation 20:4-6. It has certainly not been true in the past or in the present. This is something that will be during the time Christ is reigning on earth as sovereign over all the world.

The encouragement and application that can be taken from this for today is the attitude of the people prophesied about them saying, "*Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.*" There is a desire to set before the Lord in worship, learn His ways, and adjust their lives to be lived in agreement with what the Lord says is right. These people are not necessarily claiming the Lord as their God. They identify Him as "*...the God of Jacob*" rather than their Lord. They at least have seen the value of following the commandments and applying the teaching of the Lord in their lives, even if they refuse to worship Him as Lord.

The Church should be showing this kind of joy in gathering for worship and studying the Word of God. Those during the millennial reign will desire to listen to the teaching of God even when they have not committed themselves to Him. It should at least be said of those claiming Christ as Lord over their lives even now that they have a desire to learn from and give worship to Him.

This kind of attitude will only develop when a person makes Christ the treasure of their life. A treasure is something that you prize above other things. It is something that others are told about regardless if they want to hear about it or not. Those who were with Jesus during His earthly ministry could not stop talking about Him. Everyone who came into contact with Him was changed in some way. No one ever left the same way after meeting Jesus. They were either transformed or deformed. They were either drawn closer to God in love or they were farther from Him in the hardening of their hearts.

The same can be said today about those who hear the Gospel. No one is unaffected by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 3:15 quotes a portion of Psalm 95, "*...Today, if you*

will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion..." (Psalm 95:7-8, NKJV). The rebellion is referring to the Israelites who saw all the miraculous work of God and refused to trust Him to fulfill His promises. They witnessed the plagues which destroyed the credibility of the main gods and goddesses worshiped by the Egyptians, the parting of the Red Sea for their escape from the Egyptian army, and the destruction of the Egyptian army, but three days later began complaining against God (Exodus 7:1-15:27).

Jesus made it clear that those who are known to Him as family are those who listen to and do the Word of God in their lives (Luke 8:19-21). James also was inspired to warn those who would think they know the Lord to be doers of the Word rather than hearers because it is self-deception to merely listen and read God's Word without applying it to one's life. Therefore, as children of God His will must be the highest priority in life and the one thing everything else is scheduled around to ensure it will happen. The mindset of God's people should never be training for battle with the enemy and against flesh and blood, to act righteously in the world to reveal the presence of God within them.

Train for Righteousness

Micah 4:3, NKJV

*He shall judge between many peoples,
And rebuke strong nations afar off;
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.*

People everywhere prepare for the worst and rarely hope for the best. Everyone is guilty until proven innocent, is seen as someone that is about to take advantage of a situation for their own gain, and/or is needed to dominate over in order to prevent them from controlling or intimidating the present circumstances in their favor. This is indeed a sinful and cynical world view which is not promoted in the Bible or commanded by Jesus.

God is the only rightful Judge over all mankind because He alone is without flaw and knows truth completely since He is truth that is living and active in all He created for His glory. During the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth, there will be a time of peace like no other in human history. People talk about peace and long for it, but peace is only possible when the ruler is perfect in everything.

This passage has obviously not taken place and is still waiting future fulfillment since this atmosphere of peace has never existed in the world. World rulers do not trust because they themselves are untrustworthy being mere men and women themselves. Everyone has sin and falls short of the perfection that God has established in His perfect authority (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). The righteous rule of God creates an environment of peace that holds those who have evil intent in their heart down to a minimum because justice is swift and executed in proper measure every time.

Justice is certainly not a guarantee in our current world climate. Disarming oneself personally or nationally is a dangerous thing at this time in history, in the past, or any time in the near future it would appear. Now is especially not the time to abandon

training in self-defense and surrendering means of personal protection. When Christ reigns upon the earth and in His eternal kingdom there will be no more need to learn war or to protect oneself personally since God is the One who protects and supplies all that is needed to His people.

As dearly loved children of God, there is no reason for the idea of protection and building fortification to consume and preoccupy every last moment. The people of God need to be training themselves for righteousness now to be prepared to live in the kingdom of God in the future, as well as be aware of the dangerous climate of society and the political landscape that is being lived in today. It is a difficult balance that is to be held to follow the instruction of Jesus to be as gentle as doves and as crafty as serpents.

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (Matthew 10:16-20, NKJV). This is indeed a fine line to walk and a dangerous world to live in for those who are God’s children. We must be in the world so Christ can reveal Himself through His people, but also remain separate from them to maintain the purity of the Gospel message and godly character.

The balance is found in looking at how Jesus dealt with society and sin in order to address these things without in any way condoning or excusing sin. Jesus divided people, family members, and even friends from one another. Jesus proclaimed it was not peace but a sword He had brought into the world (Matthew 10:34-39). Unity for the child of God is always used in reference to other believers (John 15:12-17). Anytime the child of God is dealing with sin they are told to be careful lest they fall into the same sin (Galatians 6:1-5). When the sin is of the world it is crucial to be a model of godly behavior and thinking rather than judging them since they do not know any better (1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Ephesians 4:6-8).

What are some examples that can help God’s people know how to live in this tension between caution and preparation? There are some great examples for today from the book of Acts. Gospel truth must be shared publicly without fear of other people’s reactions by trusting in the Holy Spirit to give the words needed both for proclamation and defense (Acts 4:5-21). There needs to be a willingness to share and explain the Gospel to any and all that God brings into the life of His child (Acts 8:26-39, 10:9-23). God must always be the center of attention and the One who is lifted up no matter how much people respect or hate the individual(s) bringing the Gospel message (Acts 14:8-20). The conduct of God’s people must remain consistent at all times regardless of their circumstances they are having to endure presently (Acts 27:1-28-15).

There will always be trouble in this world because mankind is in open rebellion against their Creator. Those who are disciples of Christ are not taken out of the world upon their conversion, but made into ambassadors of Christ with the ministry of reconciliation as their calling (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). God is using His people and the transformation He brings about in their lives by the power of the Holy Spirit living within them to reveal His power and true nature to those who are lost in their sins. Turning away from those who do not know Christ has never been an option for

those who are disciples of Jesus, but neither is being in partnership with sin something that God called His people to do either. Therefore, disciples of Christ must make sure they are being trained and transformed by the Spirit of God living within them to hold the tension of growing in righteousness but refraining from becoming polluted by the sin of compromise by condoning or down playing the deadliness of sin and the wrath of God on sin. This is the narrow path that those in Christ must walk with Him and always be aware they are in His presence as well as the observant eye of the world.

Walk in God's Presence

Micah 4:4-5, NKJV

*But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree,
And no one shall make them afraid;
For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.
For all people walk each in the name of his god,
But we will walk in the name of the Lord our God
Forever and ever.*

The picture perfect utopia of society is given in these two short verses. Everyone has what they need to provide them for their own personal food and drink, “...*everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree*”. There is no fear of theft or attack for anyone whether a foreigner or neighbor because of Christ’s reign when it is said, “...*no one shall make them afraid; For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken*”. No one will be forced or coerced into accepting Christ as their Savior, but can worship whatever and however they choose to as long as none of the laws of God are violated, “...*For all people walk each in the name of his god...*”. There will be some who choose to, “...*walk in the name of the Lord our God Forever and ever*”. These are the ones who accept Christ’s rule civilly but also recognize Him as God and worship Him accordingly.

Many would love to have these things to be true about society today, but that is impossible as long as mankind rules over themselves. God is the only One who can manage and maintain such a society and rule over it justly because there is no favoritism with Him and all His rulings are righteous. Mankind will struggle with favoritism when dealing with different people and over a variety of issues. Their rulings are often based on information that is either incomplete or twisted by a few or many degrees removed from the truth. The perfect society has been attempted by nearly every generation that has ever lived, but none of them could or will ever escape the influence of the sinful nature that resides in all people.

Walking in the presence of God is to be aware that God is all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful which means there is nothing His child can do, think, say, feel, or experience that God does not hear, see, understand, or is powerless to overcome. Sin no longer has dominion over the one who has accepted Christ as their new Master over their lives (Romans 6:13-14). The threat of death should never be enough to cause the child of God to submit to compromise, for their life is hidden in Christ in the heavenly realms (Colossians 3:1-3). Acknowledging these two things alone and living in their reality will demonstrate a confidence and peace that will stand out among those who are consumed by this world’s pleasures.

Those of this world are continually concerned with protecting themselves and making sure they will have enough in case of the zombie apocalypse, nuclear war, or invasion of aliens. These are real fears in many people's lives of which they take extremely seriously. There is no reason to live in fear of these things when Christ is known as the Savior and Lord of life. His Spirit living within helps to keep God's people from being overwhelmed with fear and focused on what their lives are to be about. They are to be focused on living in God's eternal kingdom rather than staying alive for as long as possible by any means necessary.

The disciples who followed Jesus and became His apostles after His ascension into heaven and the early Christians understood that the Gospel message was worth losing everything for, including their life. That is far from the majority mindset of people sitting in pews across North America and Europe, but is known in the rest of the world where it is illegal to be a Christian or to have a Bible in their possession. The Church under severe persecution spreads like wildfire across a dry grassy plain. The Church struggles with compromise and authenticity wherever Christianity is seen as equal to any of the false religions of the world.

Whatever does not cost a person dearly to believe in will often be held in doubt and will easily be compromised because there is no investment of their lives in it. That which costs a person greatly to believe in because they know it is the truth they will cherish it above all else. Walking confidently and unapologetic on beliefs that are grounded in Scripture will be misinterpreted as arrogance, hate, intolerance, and bigotry by a world that practices all those things against God's people due to the conviction true righteousness brings against unrighteousness.

Apostle Peter was inspired to encourage believers then and even now, "*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation*" (1 Peter 2:11-12, NKJV). Living righteously before God will cause many problems in this world. Jesus did everything perfectly, without sin and they crucified Him as a common criminal. Why do His followers assume they will or should avoid such suffering? Jesus made it clear that if the world hated Him they would hate those who followed Him (John 15:18-25).

There will be many things those of this world will say and do against those following Christ because they love sin more than the salvation God offers through His Son, Jesus the Christ. The utopia that is longed for is impossible in the fallen state of this world at the present. It will only be here during the millennial reign of Christ which none of us will be here to see if you believe in the rapture of the Church and the Great Tribulation that will precede Jesus' return to physically reign over the world for one thousand years. Therefore, God's people must make sure that all who they know and the generations who follow for as long as the Lord chooses to wait to return will hear and know the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What others do must not be allowed to distract the people of God from serving the Lord wholeheartedly. By doing this, God's people can reveal the peace only obedience to God can provide by living in His victory right now.