

What are you supposed to do with this?

In chapter 3, Micah spoke of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem.  
He had denounced the wickedness and corruption  
of Judah’s prophets, priests, and leaders  
Jeremiah tells us that after Micah’s sermon in chapter 3,  
Hezekiah repented!

And so when we hear the warning of the coming judgment,  
we too should repent –  
because we have not loved God and neighbor as we ought.

But what was Hezekiah supposed to do with chapters 4-5?

What are *you* supposed to do with this?  
In these chapters God says that *he* is the one who will save Jerusalem.

What do you need to do?

You need to believe what God says.

That’s harder than it sounds.  
It always has been.

Hezekiah lives in the heyday of Assyrian power.  
The kingdom of David has shrunk to less than a tenth of its former reach.  
And yet God says that the nations will come to Jerusalem –  
seeking to hear the wisdom of God’s law.

And you’re supposed to believe that?

As the brutal war machine of the Assyrians draws closer,  
it’s awfully hard to believe in the LORD –

just like it’s hard for *you* to believe in the Lord  
when you see such nice, decent folk who don’t believe in God at all;  
when you see how much science & technology can accomplish –  
regardless of a person’s faith.

Micah calls Hezekiah – *and us* – to believe the message of what God will do *in the latter days*.

Maybe Hezekiah’s repentance prompted the sermon in chapter 4!

Micah turns from the theme of judgment to the theme of hope and promise,  
as if to say, “there is hope beyond the grave.”

The connections between chapter 3 and chapter 4 are important:  
notice the role of Zion:

in 3:10-12, “who build Zion with blood...therefore Zion shall be plowed”  
 but in 4:2, “out of Zion shall go forth the law”  
 in 3:12, the mountain of the house becomes a wooded height;  
 but in 4:1, the mountain of the house of the LORD  
 is established as the highest of the mountains.  
 In 3:9, 11, the wicked “heads” of Jacob give judgment for a bribe,  
 in 4:1, Zion is at the “head” of the mountains  
 (the word “highest” is the same word as “head” in 3:9, 11).  
 In 3:11 the wicked rulers are judging and teaching for their own selfish benefit,  
 but in 4:2-3 God judges and teaches for the good of the nations.

The contrast could not be more clear –  
 neither could it be more intentional.

Micah is saying that the Israel that is *now* must perish,  
 so that God may raise up a new Israel – a new Zion –  
 in which justice and righteousness will prevail.

As Waltke puts it,

“Jerusalem, which fell darkly under the rule of lawless judges and ecclesiastics,  
 will not end as a heap of rubble,  
 despised and trampled under the feet of uncircumcised armies,  
 but will in the latter days be esteemed universally and eternally  
 as the place of God’s throne and the source of just laws  
 that issue into peace.” (Waltke, 205)

When are those latter days?

## **1. The Hope of the Church: the Exaltation of the New Jerusalem (4:1-8)**

### **a. In the Latter Days, the Nations Will Come and Worship in Zion (v1-5)**

*It shall come to pass in the latter days  
 that the mountain of the house of the LORD  
 shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
 and it shall be lifted up above the hills;  
 and peoples shall flow to it,  
<sup>2</sup> 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.”  
 For out of Zion shall go forth the law,<sup>[b]</sup>  
 and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
<sup>3</sup> He shall judge between many peoples,  
 and shall decide for strong nations far away;  
 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;*  
<sup>4</sup> *but they shall sit every man 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.*  
<sup>5</sup> *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.*

Chapter 4, verses 1-5 are curious.

If you think that you've heard this before – you have.

It is taken almost verbatim from Isaiah 2:1-5.

Or perhaps Isaiah 2 is taken almost verbatim from Micah 4!

I don't know who wrote it first,

but both authors carefully wove it into the fabric of their prophecies,

so it doesn't really matter who used it first!

But Micah says that this will happen in “the latter days.”

The latter days in the OT refers to the “remote future.”

The NT uses it in two ways –

in Acts 2, Peter says that the “latter days” of Joel 2 started at Pentecost.

likewise, in Hebrews 1, we hear that “in these last days”

God has spoken in his son.

In this first sense, the “latter days” covers the whole Christian era,  
from Pentecost to the return of Christ.

The second usage is found in 2 Timothy 3:1 and 2 Pet 3:3 (etc.)

where the “latter days” refers to the dark days of difficulty  
just before Christ's return.

But Micah's “latter days” are not the days of darkness and difficulty –

but the days when the nations come to the mountain of the LORD.

And if we understand the mountain of the LORD, we will see what the latter days must be:

The mountain of the LORD is an interesting phrase,

parallel to “the house of the God of Jacob.”

If you think back to Mt Sinai (the original “mountain of God”),

there was the foot of the mountain (where the people were),

there was the side of the mountain (where the 70 elders went),

and there was the top of the mountain (where only Moses went).

The tabernacle (and temple) follow the same design –

with the courtyard (for the people),

the holy place (for the priests),

and the Holy of Holies (for the high priest).

After all, the glory of the LORD – the presence of God –

went from the top of Mt Sinai to the Holy of Holies

(as Psalm 68 puts it, “Sinai is now in the sanctuary”).

So even though Jerusalem is not located on the highest of mountains,  
there is a sense in which the mountain of the house of the LORD  
*shall be established as the highest of the mountains,*  
not as a physical description, but a spiritual description.

The point of all this is to say that in the latter days,  
the dominion of God will extend to all nations.

The nations will come to the holy mountain  
and will seek to know the ways of the LORD.

This is precisely what has happened since Christ has come.  
The nations now are streaming into the heavenly Jerusalem,  
longing to hear the Word of the LORD.

In Joel 3:10 we heard that the nations would turn their plowshares into swords,  
and pruning hooks into spears –  
thus bringing war against the LORD prior to the final judgment.

Now in Micah 4:3-4, we hear the reverse.  
When God has brought judgment and peace is restored,  
then everyone shall sit under own vine and fig tree –  
in other words, no one shall fear invading armies,  
*and no one will fear oppressive neighbors!*

Isaiah used the image of the armies of the nations flooding in against Jerusalem –  
a rising tide swelling and filling all the earth –  
but here the nations *flow* into Jerusalem in order to hear the word of the LORD.

Waltke says it well when he says,  
“Mount Zion became shrouded under the imperial Assyrian army  
and became totally hidden under the cloud of the Babylonian army,  
but its heavenly identity began to emerge when it arose phoenix-like  
in Israel’s postexilic restoration;  
it became decisively visible and victorious when Jesus was lifted up on the cross  
to attract all peoples to himself (John 11:32),  
and when, having triumphed over Satan and death by his resurrection,  
he ascended to his heavenly throne in the eternal sanctuary  
from where he exercises authority over all nations  
by giving eternal life to as many as the Father has given him.” (Waltke, 209)

**b. In that Day, God Will Assemble the Remnant of the Lame (v6-7)**

<sup>6</sup> *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;*

<sup>7</sup> *and 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.*

Verses 6-7 then describe what “that day” will look like.

The remnant – the lame and the exiles –  
will become “a strong nation.”

But notice how God describes them:  
“those whom *I* have afflicted.”

Micah is not saying that the strong and powerful have afflicted them –  
and so now God will take pity on the poor.

Rather, Micah is saying that *God* has afflicted them –  
and so now God will take pity on them.

Because ultimately, Micah’s remnant of the poor and afflicted  
*did* return from exile – and God was with them –  
but for 500 years after the restoration,  
you couldn’t call them “a strong nation”!

They continued to be afflicted by the Persians, the Greeks,  
the Selucids, the Ptolemies, and the Romans!

God had promised that the day would come when he would restore the afflicted remnant,  
when he would *reign over them*.

And that happened only when Yahweh came in the flesh –  
when Jesus became a remnant of one –  
when he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted –  
then God restored the Kingship to Zion,

as he says in verse 8:

**c. The Kingship Will Be Restored to Zion (v8)**

<sup>8</sup> *And you, O tower of the flock,  
hill of the daughter of Zion,  
to you shall it come,  
the former dominion shall come,  
kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.*

Now Micah addresses Jerusalem herself.

Jerusalem is the tower of the flock – the guardian of God’s people.

The word translated “hill” is “Ophel” –

which is also the name of the fortified hill just south of the temple.

“Daughter of Zion” is the traditional translation,  
but it may be slightly misleading.  
It sounds like it refers to Zion’s daughter –  
but in fact, Zion *is* the daughter.

After all, who *is* the “daughter of Jerusalem”?  
There are references to the *daughters* (plural) of Jerusalem –  
but they always refer to the cities and villages of Judah  
as Jerusalem’s daughters.  
But there is no singular *daughter* of Zion.

Zion *is* the daughter.  
Daughter Zion speaks of Jerusalem’s joy, dignity and favor –

which is precisely what the second half of the verse is all about:

the former dominion returning to Zion –  
kingship for the daughter, Jerusalem.

It’s worth thinking about the importance of this image.  
The city – Jerusalem – is portrayed as a woman – a daughter.  
And this is important because Zion is also pregnant!

## **2. The Birth Pangs of the Daughter of Zion (4:9-13)**

### **a. Zion’s Labor (v9-10)**

<sup>9</sup> *Now why do you cry aloud?  
Is there no king in you?  
Has your counselor perished,  
that pain seized you like a woman in labor?*  
<sup>10</sup> *Writhe and groan,<sup>[c]</sup> O daughter of Zion,  
like a woman in labor,  
for now you shall go out from the city  
and dwell in the open country;  
you shall go to Babylon.  
There you shall be rescued;  
there the LORD will redeem you  
from the hand of your enemies.*

There are three connected points that follow –  
each of these points begins with the word “now”, followed by an imperative:

- 1) Now why do you cry aloud? (v9-10)  
so writhe and groan, O daughter Zion;
- 2) Now many nations are assembled (v11-13)  
so arise and thresh, O daughter Zion;
- 3) Now O daughter of troops (5:1ff)  
muster your troops!

The first “now” is the catastrophe – Zion’s labor and agony.  
The second “now” is the deliverance – Zion’s giving birth and harvest.  
The third “now” retells the whole story.

Daughter Zion is like a woman in labor.  
She writhes and groans in childbirth –  
Micah clearly refers to the exile in Babylon as that agony.

Childbirth is painful.  
Childbirth is agonizingly painful.  
When a doctor wants a woman to tell him how much pain she is in,  
he will often ask, “how does this compare to childbirth?”

But the pain of childbirth is also different from all other pains –  
because at the end of childbirth, there is a child!

At the end of a kidney stone, there is a kidney stone –  
but you do not cherish and love the kidney stone!

#### **b. Zion’s Harvest (v11-13)**

<sup>11</sup> *Now many nations  
are assembled against you,  
saying, “Let her be defiled,  
and let our eyes gaze upon Zion.”*  
<sup>12</sup> *But they do not know  
the thoughts of the LORD;  
they do not understand his plan,  
that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor.*  
<sup>13</sup> *Arise and thresh,  
O daughter of Zion,  
for I will make your horn iron,  
and I will make your hoofs bronze;  
you shall beat in pieces many peoples;  
and shall devote<sup>[d]</sup> their gain to the LORD,  
their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.*

Verse 11 brings us to the second “now.”  
The nations gather against Jerusalem to defile her.  
But God has a different plan.

Daughter Zion will trample the nations with her hoofs of bronze and horn of iron,  
and she will beat the peoples into pieces.

In verses 9-10, Zion is carried off into Babylon.  
In verses 11-13, Zion pounds the nations into submission and plunders them,

bringing their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.

But how will God do this?

The point of chapter 5 is to flesh out what we have heard in chapter 4.

### **3. The Incarnation and the Age to Come (5:1-15)**

#### **a. The Birth of a Shepherd in Bethlehem (v1-6)**

*Now muster your troops, O daughter<sup>[b]</sup> of troops;  
siege is laid against us;  
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel  
on the cheek.*

The setting is almost certainly the siege of Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah.

Micah speaks of the siege laid against us (and in verse 5 he refers directly to Assyria).

But rather than continue his address to Jerusalem,  
he turns and looks outside the walls to “Bethlehem Ephrathah.”

<sup>2 [c]</sup> *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
from ancient days.*

Jerusalem was David’s capital city –  
but Bethlehem was his hometown.  
And so Micah reminds Israel that when trouble comes to Jerusalem –  
when daughter Zion is in danger –  
help will come from Bethlehem.

Bethlehem is a small village.  
But God will choose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.  
Things that appear foolish to the rulers of this age will shame the wise.

<sup>3</sup> *Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has given birth;  
then the rest of his brothers shall return  
to the people of Israel.*

<sup>4</sup> *And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.  
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth.*

<sup>5</sup> *And he shall be their peace.*

Micah then returns to the theme of Daughter Zion in labor –



and when she who is in labor has given birth,  
“then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

Remember what we saw in Chronicles.

By the time of Hezekiah, the kingdom of David had shrunk to a region  
the size of St. Joseph and LaPorte counties.

David had ruled a kingdom the size of Indiana.

But now Hezekiah, the son of David, rules a tiny fragment of the old empire.

But Micah says that when she who is in labor has given birth –  
when Daughter Zion gives birth to the Shepherd,  
then his brethren will be restored and returned – and they will dwell secure.

Isaiah would speak of the woman in labor  
who gave birth to a male child,  
and then to a whole nation in a moment (Isaiah 66).

Micah says that the birth of this one will lead to the restoration of his brothers.  
This one will give us peace!

This is what Zechariah and Elizabeth were longing for.  
This is what Simeon and Anna were waiting for.

Because when the Messiah comes,  
then he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD.

That’s what Jesus is doing!  
Jesus is our peace – our Shalom.  
That’s what Paul says in Ephesians when he says that Christ  
has brought *peace* – making one new man out of Jew and Gentile.  
We have been adopted into his family –  
we have been grafted into the vine.

And so therefore, we can take comfort from verses 5-6:

*When the Assyrian comes into our land  
and treads in our palaces,  
then we will raise against him seven shepherds  
and eight princes of men;  
6 they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,  
and the land of Nimrod at its entrances;  
and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian  
when he comes into our land  
and treads within our border.*

Micah says that when the Assyrians attack,  
Jerusalem will be spared because of the seven shepherds (the eight princes)

who will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword.

Yes, God delivered Jerusalem in Micah's day from Sennacherib – from the Assyrian threat.  
But even more, God delivered *us* from the *worse* Assyria –  
the power of the devil –  
and so we can have confidence that King Jesus will protect Zion from all assaults.

And the modern day Assyrians generally do not wield swords –  
they wield I-pads and Kindles.

They say that there is no such thing as “truth” –  
or, more precisely, that everyone has their own truth.

But God has raised up shepherds to preach and warn you against the dangers of our day:  
such as materialism and commercialism;  
Do you love stuff?  
How would you do at getting along without stuff?

Part of my role as your pastor is to serve as one of the shepherds  
who beats off the Assyrian invasion and restores the peace of Christ

**b. The Remnant of Jacob Will Rule the Nations (v7-9)**

<sup>7</sup> *Then the remnant of Jacob shall be  
in the midst of many peoples  
like dew from the LORD,  
like showers on the grass,  
which delay not for a man  
nor wait for the children of man.*

<sup>8</sup> *And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations,  
in the midst of many peoples,  
like a lion among the beasts of the forest,  
like a young lion among the flocks of sheep,  
which, when it goes through, treads down  
and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.*

<sup>9</sup> *Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries,  
and all your enemies shall be cut off.*

Then the remnant of Jacob will rule the nations.

Verses 7-9 vigorously assert the dominion of the remnant of Jacob over the earth.

It sounds absurd.

It is ludicrous to think that the remnant of Jacob will rule the nations.

Israel *at its most powerful* could barely hold off the surrounding *minor nations*  
(like Syria or the Philistines).

When faced with Babylon, Assyria, or Egypt,  
Israel didn't have a chance!

But now Micah portrays the *remnant of Jacob* – a leftover pittance of Israel – as the dominant power among the nations.

Again, it would be like saying that South Bend will be the most powerful city in the world.

What was Micah smoking?

### c. Because the LORD Will Judge the Nations (v10-15)

Verses 10-15 then explains *how* Israel will do this.

It is because the LORD will judge the nations,  
*starting with Israel!*

Notice how it starts:

<sup>10</sup> *And in that day, declares the LORD,  
I will cut off your horses from among you  
and will destroy your chariots;*  
<sup>11</sup> *and I will cut off the cities of your land  
and throw down all your strongholds;*  
<sup>12</sup> *and I will cut off sorceries from your hand,  
and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes;*  
<sup>13</sup> *and I will cut off your carved images  
and your pillars from among you,  
and you shall bow down no more  
to the work of your hands;*  
<sup>14</sup> *and I will root out your Asherah images from among you  
and destroy your cities.*

The first five verses are all about how God will judge Israel!

In that day – in the day of judgment, when God makes all things right –  
God will cut off horses and chariots,  
cities and strongholds.  
Sorcerers and fortune tellers will be out of business,  
and idolatry will be annihilated.

The latter points make sense to us.

God had always condemned idolatry and fortune tellers.  
But why is God destroying the fortresses and chariots?  
God had said in Deuteronomy that they must not trust in their own strength.  
Jerusalem must trust in the LORD – not in fortifications and weapons.

This is why Christ died for the church:

“to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,  
and to present her to himself as a radiant church,

without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:26-27).

And we must put aside our trust in our own strength – as well as our trust in magic or other gods.

You might say, “Oh, I don’t believe in magic – that’s just silly!”

People sometimes think that “magic” refers to the attempt to manipulate the occult,  
but magic is actually much broader.

I would suggest that modern science is a form of magic or sorcery.

Chemists study the mysterious properties of nature

in order to get different compounds to do wonderful things.

Manipulating nature – without reference to nature’s God –  
is a form of magic!

Think about it this way:

is there anything inherently wrong with chariots or fortresses?

No.

Then why does God say that he will destroy their chariots  
and throw down their strongholds?

In the same way, if you are trusting in science and technology –  
rather than trusting in God –

then God will cut off the thing that you most cling to!

If you are doing bad things, then God will cut them off.

If you are loving good things *in place of God*, then God will cut them off as well.

And having purified Israel,

the LORD will go on to wreak vengeance on the disobedient nations as well.

<sup>15</sup> *And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance  
on the nations that did not obey.*

In other words, those nations that humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem

(beginning of chapter 4)

will be blessed.

But those nations that refused – that did not obey –

will be destroyed.

You can pretty easily see the root of Romans 2:9-10 here:

“There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil,  
the Jew first and also the Greek,

but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good,  
the Jew first and also the Greek.”