

God says, My King is Coming!

Micah 5:2-5^a

*He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely,
for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth
And he will be their peace.
(Micah 5:4)*

Before we can take in the message of God's love, given in these verses in Micah, we need to look at God's word elsewhere! ***As I go on to tell more of what God said, let's ask God to remind each of us when we have disobeyed and lacked faith!***

How do you deal with a wayward, disobedient, and defiant child? You have instructed him in what is right – you have given him your love and care. But he has decided to go **his** own way, not yours. You can show your anger at his wilful behaviour and punish him in some way. But, in the end, you can only grieve his choice and the harm this will bring him.

Isn't this the situation that developed between Israel and God? In his holiness, God hates their evil conduct, and through his prophets tells them that, in his justice, he must punish their sin, if they don't turn back, leave their evil ways and seek his forgiveness.

After having rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, even before they entered the Promised Land, Moses warned them that if they disobeyed God, refusing to follow his instructions and turning to other gods, persisting in their rebellion, then, *You will be uprooted from your land you are entering to possess. The Lord will scatter you among all nations ... (Deut 28:63-64)*

The prophets God sent to them told of God's love, how he longed for them to change and turn back to him. *Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Rather am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? ... Rid yourselves of all the offences you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live! (Ezek 18:23, 31-32)*

In another place we read, *When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more I called them, the further they went from me .. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms, but they did not realise it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love ...*

*Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? .. My people are **determined** to turn from me... How **can** I give you up, Ephraim? How **can** I hand you over, Israel? .. My heart is changed within me, all my compassion is aroused. I will **not** carry out my fierce anger, for I am God and not man – the Holy One among you, I will **not** come in wrath..*

(Hosea 11:1-9)

This was the situation that Micah was addressing in his book. *Hear this, you leaders .. you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with wickedness. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet you lean upon the Lord and say, “Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us.” Therefore, because of **you**, Zion will be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets. (Micah 3:9-12)*

Micah likens the inhabitants of the city facing God’s judgement to a woman suffering birth-pangs: *Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labour, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. You **will** go to Babylon ... (Micah 4:10)*

God’s plans will never be thwarted by man’s rebellion – in exile the remnant of his people will at last repent of their defiance and learn to obey – and discover again God’s love for them and his mercy.

For, all along, God had promised to bless them with a Deliverer, who would be a king after his own heart, as David had been, but much, much better! His promise to King David is told in 2 Samuel 7 and repeated elsewhere, most notably in Psalm 89, where God is quoted as saying: *Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness – and I will not lie to David – that his line will continue for ever and **his throne endure before me like the sun, it **will be established for ever** ..***

But the psalmist goes on to tell God **this has ceased to be true**, *You have renounced the covenant with your servant and have defiled his crown in the dust! (Psa 89: 35-37; 39)* Was this true?

Yes, sadly, but also **No!** **For God’s promises hold true for ever!**

God’s promise of a Saviour comes in many places – including this great passage in Micah, that we’ve heard read:

*O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are but a small Judean village, yet you will be the birthplace of **My King**, who is **alive from everlasting ages** past! (5:2, Living Bible)* And we also heard:

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace. (Micah 5:4)

But the most glorious promise is in Isaiah:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from this time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9: 6,7)

What then is to be our response to these words that you have just heard?

We also do not deserve God’s love and forgiveness. Our sin may not be greed for money, or worshipping goddesses of sex – but we can all follow some substitute for trusting and serving God alone. But God hates all sin, because it ruins us and his world – we do not deserve his mercy! Ask him to show you where you have fallen short, where you have failed to love him, by failing to love others, by your attitude, by your words or actions. I know that I need to; I expect you do also.

We must acknowledge what he says to us is true. Let us ask for truly repentant hearts, willing to hate what God hates and to turn from it, and to love what God loves and to do it!

May each of us love this King, who has been more than promised, **who has actually come**, willing to be born and grow up as we have done, to suffer pain and sorrow as we have done, to be tempted in all respects as we are – but who never gave into it, and who can save

us, when we are tempted. Who went willingly to a terrible death, so that we might be forgiven. ***What a wonderful King you are, Lord Jesus!*** Let us yield to him our lives, all that we are, and obey him. Let us learn to praise His Name, here in this life, so that in the life to come, we may praise him all the more wonderfully!