

Micah 4 - "Peace and a Sword"

Opener: Have you personally been involved in war or do you have family members who have been and have returned to tell their stories?

Micah 3 was all very much doom and gloom. In fact, the first three chapters were as Ahaz was ruler. Ironically, it's as Hezekiah becomes king and obeys the law, destroys idols and removes the high places that in chapter 4 we now find them under siege from Assyrian armies. The other thing to note is that as things are looking bad for Judah, God promises them salvation.

Read Micah 4:1-8

The contrast between chapter 3 and chapter 4 is interesting. Yahweh was going to destroy Jerusalem but now he says he will make the temple mount higher than the other mountains (in other words, most important).

Q. Did Yahweh change his mind? Jeremiah 26:17-19 may or may not help.

Q. As soon as you read the words, "It shall come to pass in the latter days" (v1) are you tempted to read a timeline into the words?

I must admit that I was. I started to try and figure out what was going to happen when - what applied to exile, return from exile, the coming of the Messiah, the second coming, etc. But then I realized that that would have no bearing on the original readers who would have no idea of any of these events except the expected coming of the Messiah. So to read the text that way is to betray it's meaning (note: that applies for Revelation too!).

Q. In light of that how would you, as an Israelite under siege from the nation who took your much bigger brother (the 10 northern tribes) into exile, read these words?

Q. During a time of war it's an oracle of hope and peace for those who what (v5)?

Micah brings everyone down to earth with a bump with v9.

Read Micah 4:9-13.

I think that verses 10 onwards are a new oracle. Turn to Isaiah in your bibles and note Chs 36-37 (the Siege of Jerusalem) and then after a fascinating interlude, what happens in Ch 39. It seems a bit foolish from Hezekiah (maybe it's meant to be intimidating) but he shows all the wealth of Judah to envoys from Babylon. Ch 40 then looks like it was written from exile (in Babylon).

Q. What do verses 10-13 of Micah 4 tell us that Yahweh will do for Judah when they are in exile?

I think in Micah 4 there's an overarching message of peace and salvation for the faithful.

Finally. How would you apply this under a new covenant? Does it apply to any wars in the world today (esp. Israel)? Does God enjoy or allow war?