

Strength for Today – Bright Hope for Tomorrow – Micah 4:1-7

Read passage – often quoted as a feel good “saying” by those who neither understand it, believe it, or trust in the God who wrote it
Written over 2700 years ago it’s a prophecy of hope that centers on the fulfillment of *God’s Kingdom*, and has every bit as much importance and significance for our life today as it did then; Even more so
We’re much closer to its final fulfillment, and so should find strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow in these promises

Unfortunately, that’s not always true of our lives, is it?
We’re not always long on strength and high on hope
Sometimes we allow our circumstances to sap our strength and diminish our hope
Sometimes we look to the wrong things to find hope; Things like . . .
Money and possessions – they won’t last forever; and the things that do outlast you, you can’t take with you; It’s a lose-lose
People – whether it’s your spouse, the President, or your SG leader, it’s quite possible they will disappoint you or let you down
Our country; News flash – the US won’t be around forever
I’m as patriotic as the next guy, and believe we all should be, but . . .
If you’re relying on the good ol’ US to fuel your strength and feed your hope, you’re going to be disappointed in the long run
We try to find our strength and hope in the wrong things/people
And too often allow our circumstances to sap our strength and diminish our hope

God spoke to us long ago for just that reason –
“As bad as things are, or as bad as things might get, there’s always cause for hope because of what I’m *going* to do”
I call those things “hope builders”

Hope Builder #1 – Eventually, God’s rule and reign will prevail (v1)

The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established (1a)
The mountain of the house of the Lord refers to God’s kingdom; his realm of rule/reign
In the ANE, mountains and hills were common geographic locations on which kings established their cities/fortresses . . .
And from which they reigned over their land/people
That being the case, a king’s rule/reign became synonymous with the mountain/hill on which he presided

God’s kingdom (rule/reign) *will* be established above all other kingdoms
It shall come to pass (1a)
It *will* trump all other power structures – social, political, or religious
You can count on it – that’s why it builds hope; it *will* happen
Hope in the Bible is the *certainty* of things to come; It’s not a wish and prayer
It’s the confident expectation of things to come, based on the promises of God’s word
Eventually, God’s rule and reign will prevail over all others

This will happen *in the latter days*
The latter days commenced with the coming of Christ who said in Mk 1:15 – *the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (it’s near in proximity and here in time)
The latter days will be fulfilled in the new heavens and new earth at the end of time

As with most prophecies, this one has a two-fold meaning – it’s *already-but not yet*
It’s happening now, and is yet to be completed later
God’s kingdom is where ever his rule and reign is established and followed
Already taking shape *spiritually* in the hearts of those who submit their lives to Christ
That’s the church – God’s rule/reign is *already* being established in the church
But it’s *not yet* fulfilled *physically* in the world at large
Every knee has not yet bowed and tongue confessed that Jesus is Lord
Nor do we see the outward evidence referred to in v3-4

The K of G is *already* – spiritually; But *not yet* – physically
Eventually it will be both
Eventually, all the powers that be, seen/unseen, strong/weak, good/bad – will give way to God’s perfect and benevolent reign in this world
You can count on it; That’s bright hope for tomorrow

Question is – Are you so enamored with the current state of things, or so mired in your own daily struggles, that you’ve lost sight of better things to come?
Has your hope waned? Are you allowing the struggles of life to sap your strength and diminish your hope?
If so, it’s time to lift up your eyes (Ps 121) and refresh your perspective
Because despite your struggles, there *is* bright hope for tomorrow in the fact that eventually, God’s rule and reign will prevail; And . . .

Hope Builder #2 – Along the way, many will turn to the Lord (v2, 6-7)

Many people (individuals and people groups) will *go up to the mountain of the Lord*
They will seek the presence of the Lord, and turn to him by learning his truths and living his way

4 phrases in the space of one verse (2), that mean the same thing
Mountain of the Lord; *House of the God of Jacob*; *Zion*; *Jerusalem*
OT phrases that refer to the place and presence where God reigns, with slightly different connotations
Mountain of the Lord (preeminence); *House of the God of Jacob* (familiar; worshipping the same God in the future as our forefathers did in the past)
Zion (future triumph); *Jerusalem* (centrality; where God is, is where it’s at)
God is driving home the point that it’s *his presence/kingdom* that people will turn to

It does not mean that sometime in future God will restore temple worship in Jerusalem, and the presence of God will once again become a localized thing in one place
Hebrews 13:8 is very clear that God makes the OC obsolete because a better way has been established by Christ
And Jn 4:23-24, that God is looking for worshippers who will worship in Spirit, regardless of location
When people turn to God on this side of the cross, they don’t turn to the temple in Jerusalem, but the HS takes up residence within them . . .
And they *become* the temple themselves (1 Cor 6:19)
In the latter days, these days, many will turn to the Lord, welcoming him into their hearts

Peoples shall flow to it, [God’s kingdom/presence] *and many nations shall come* (1b-2a)
We have a pretty limited view of that these days, and wonder about it

Had 3 people receive Christ this past week; 21 baptized last Sunday

But is that happening on a large scale? All over the world? Yes!

Let me give you a few highlights . . .

- In 100 A.D., there was 1 believer per 360 people in the world; Now, even with the increase of world population, there is 1 believer for every 9 people in the world
- Christianity is growing at a rate of 115,000 new believers every DAY; 42m/year
- 5600 new churches are opening every WEEK worldwide

One conversation, one decision, one church at a time – many are turning to God

That's where the truth is

Out of Zion [God's presence] shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (2b)

2 ways of saying that it's from God's presence that God's truth comes

It's God who has it and God who imparts it

Which is why it's so important for us to know the Scriptures, because that's where he has chosen to deposit it

It's God's truth that teaches us God's ways – duh

Let us go [to God] that he may teach us his ways; that we may walk in his paths (2b)

People are turning to God because they want to know his *truth*, and live his *way*

They see the value of it; They understand the futility of their own way, and can't get enough of God's way

Lest you think that the church is reserved for those who have it all together (like the white, suburban, upper middle-class echelons of supposedly problem-free people), think again V6-7 make it clear that this turning to the Lord is for the broken-hearted – the *lame*, displaced, *and afflicted* (6)

6 – *In that day* . . . that period of time when God establishes his rule and reign spiritually and physically

It's those who are broken-hearted that he *will make the remnant* – that will be his people

It's those who are looked down on, or set aside by society because of their circumstances that he will gather to be a part of his kingdom

Those who have bore the brunt of a fallen world

Those left behind by the affluence of our culture

Those who walk with a limp, emotionally or physically, scarred because of the things done to them or the things they've done to others

Is that you? Do you walk with a limp? Are you broken-hearted?

Are you scarred by the circumstances of life, whether your fault or not?

Have you suffered God's affliction for wrong doing? (6b)

If so, there's hope

Be among those who turn to God; Who seek his presence

Who submit to his rule and reign; Who learn his ways

Be among those whom he gathers and assembles as his own

You'll find strength for today, *and* bright hope for tomorrow . . . where life will never be the same

Hope Builder #3 – In the end, life will never be the same (v3-5)

In that day when . . .

God's rule and reign will prevail both spiritually *and* physically

Christ returns, and eventually pronounces final judgment on all people (3a), ushering in a new heavens and a new earth (Rev 21)

The whole universe gives way to his redemption and restoration . . .

Life will never be the same

4 Reasons

1. Productivity will replace destruction

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks (3b)

Swords and spears are weapons of death/destruction

Plowshares (blades of the plow that cut the soil) and pruning hooks (blades used to trim trees and bushes) are instruments of productivity

As of 2004, total military spending world-wide was just over \$1 trillion

Difficult to imagine what could be accomplished if we were able to spend that time and money producing instruments of productivity instead of weapons of warfare

That's not possible this side of Jesus' return while there are still greedy, prideful, hateful people who initiate conflict and aggression

2. Peace will replace war

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (3c)

As of 2005 – 8 major wars (1000 battlefield deaths per year) and 24 lesser conflicts of varying degrees; Down from 15 major wars at the end of 2003

In 20th century alone, wars accounted for 262m deaths

No doubt some conflict is unavoidable in order to suppress those who would conquer and kill for the sake of domination

God put governments in place for just that purpose (Rom 13)

On rare occasions, as a last resort – conflict may be warranted *against* governments who are themselves *a terror to good conduct*, instead of bad (Rom 13:3)

That's how our country was started, the declaration and basis of which we celebrate this weekend

But in the end, there will be no more of that; None; Peace will replace war

3. Contentment will replace greed

Every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree (4a)

Aggression, restlessness, and want will be replaced with satisfaction, rest, contentment

A lack of basic necessities will be replaced with God's perfect provision

No longer will 852m people suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition

Not knowing where their next meal will come from when they go to bed each night

Instead, *every* man will have available to him what he needs, and more importantly he will rest content with it

4. Trust will replace fear

No one shall make them afraid (4b)

There will be no fear that what they have will be stolen (Per Mar Security out of biz)

No fear that they might be attacked

Security will rule the day

Not because there are extensive measures of protection, home security systems, electric fences, vicious dogs, or armed guards

But because every man will trust his neighbor, completely

Productivity instead of destruction; Peace – war; Contentment – greed; Trust – fear
If you’ve already turned to the Lord, these things shouldn’t be a surprise
 They should already be true in your heart because God lives in you
 They should already be true in our church because God is with us
So it’s only natural that when God’s rule and reign prevails, the same things will be true in
 our *world*, because God is *among* us

It’s a done deal, because *the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken* (4c)
 If God says it, you can count on it
Unlike those who follow lesser gods (small g), whose situation is temporary and futile,
 and will end in despair
 We will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever (5b)
 Conduct our lives in his strength; By his authority; For his glory

Conclusion
Eventually, God’s rule and reign *will* prevail
 Along the way, many people will turn to him
 In the end, life will never be the same
That’s strength for today *and* bright hope for tomorrow

Close
Enjoy your weekend; Thank the Lord for the freedom we enjoy