

Expectation for the Nation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 November 2020

Preacher: Stephen Ballingall

[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our reading for this morning, and Stephen Balingel is going to be preaching again, leading us through this prophecy of Micah.

We're going to read together Micah chapter 4 and 5. Micah is one of those little minor prophets towards the end of the Old Testament. You'll find it after Jonah and before Nahum.

Just go to Matthew's Gospel and work backwards if you can't find it, and you'll soon find your way to Micah. And we're going to read chapter 4 and through to the end of chapter 5.

And the prophet says, 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 people shall flow to it.

And many nations shall come and say, Come, let us go 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.

[1 : 08] For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off.

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

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.

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.

In that day, declares the Lord, I will assemble the lame, and gather those who have been driven away, those whom I have afflicted. The lame I will make the remnant, and those who are cast off, a strong nation.

[2 : 12] And the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion, from this time forth and forevermore. 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 why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished?

That pain seized you like a woman in labor? Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor. For now you shall go out from the city and dwell in open country.

You shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued. There the Lord will redeem you from the land of your enemies. Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion.

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.

[3 : 22] Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron. I will make your hoofs bronze. You shall beat in pieces many peoples, and shall devote their gain to the Lord, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.

Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops. Siege is laid against us with a rod. They strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. But you, O Bethlehem, Ephrata, 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 origin is from of old, from ancient days.

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, 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, and he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against

them seven shepherds and eight princes of men.

They shall shepherd the land of Assyria with a sword, and the land of Nimrod as its entrances. And he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border.

[5 : 02] 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 men.

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 flock of sheep, which when it goes through treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.

Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. And in that day, declares the Lord, I will cut off your horses from among you, and will destroy your chariots.

I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. I'll cut off your sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes. And I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you, and you shall buy down no more to the work of your hands.

I will root out your Asher images from among you and destroy your cities. And in anger and wrath, I will execute judgment on the nations that did not obey.

[6 : 29] Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, this morning we're working through all of chapters 4 and 5 of Micah.

So if you could have that open in front of you, that would be very helpful as we go through this together. Last Sunday, we left with a sobering judgment on the southern kingdom of Israel, of God's people.

Micah had unleashed judgment upon them, and it was vicious. He had his boxing gloves on. He was out to judge them. Their northern neighbors had been completely devastated by the Assyrian army as an act of judgment from the Lord.

The northern kingdom had completely rejected him, and despite the call to return to the Lord time and time again, they didn't, and judgment came crashing down on them.

But sadly, the southern kingdom of Judah, who Micah was preaching to, are in no better state. They saw that happen.

[7 : 36] They saw what happens when you reject the Lord, when you abandon him, and did nothing about it. They still haven't widely repented.

They belong to the Lord in name, but not in heart. God's special, treasured people were living entirely against his law, flaunting it.

Their leaders were actively involved in several sinful schemes. And Micah finished his judgment in chapter 3 by announcing that if the people did not repent, that Jerusalem would become, chapter 3, verse 12, a heap of ruins.

God's city, where his people and his presence in the temple lived, would be demolished, turned into a field. The Assyrian army was hovering over them, ready to pounce at any moment, being used by the Lord to accomplish his judgment.

Which makes what comes in chapter 4 that we've read this morning, all the more surprising. What we're dealing with in chapters 4 and 5, at first reading, might seem a little disjointed and doesn't have an obvious flow to it.

[8 : 53] It jumps about time-wise. But from the perspective of Israel at the time, it's all set in the future to varying degrees. A future which ought to change how they are to live in their present.

And in their present, Israel wasn't just made up of one type of person. They weren't all unrepentant sinners. There was a faithful and righteous remnant.

And Micah is preaching to both sets of people here. In these two chapters, he holds out a great unwavering hope for those that remain faithful to the Lord.

But at the same time, there is an unspoken but clear message to the faithless, which says, this hope does not belong to you.

Well, look with me first at verses 1 to 8 of chapter 4, where we see the promised hope. And this section is a remarkable turnaround from the previous verse.

[9 : 58] As Micah goes from saying that Jerusalem would be reduced to rubble in chapter 3, to now saying that in the future it's going to be established as the highest of the mountains. Let's read verse 1 together.

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.

These verses speak of the latter days when Israel, when their fortunes were going to be completely reversed. It's easy for us sitting here with the full and complete Bible in our hands to know that this is speaking of the new creation and skip forward to that.

But for Israel, they didn't have that full picture yet. So it's helpful not to rush ahead too quickly. But imagine that it's just the furthest point on the horizon when all of God's promises will be delivered. That's the time Micah's speaking about in this section. And in these latter days, the Lord's temple, that's what he means by the mountain of the house of the Lord, his dwelling place, is clearly and evidently to everyone seen to be the seat of real authority in the world.

[11:19] Everyone's going to be flocking to it. Big nations are going to be heading there looking for God to settle their fights because they all see that he is the one to be worshipped and listened to.

He's rightly positioned as Lord. He'll finally be widely recognized for who he is, the God of all the earth. The whole world is pictured to know about this.

The word's got out, many nations are coming to see this mountain. But not because it's a special mountain, not because of the grandeur, but because of its God. The Lord himself will physically rule with his people as their righteous ruler.

And that brings three consequences. Let's look at each of them in turn briefly. We see the first consequence at the end of verse 1.

People's shall flow to it, 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.

[12:27] For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Micah's speaking ahead to a time where the whole world has heard about what's happening in Jerusalem, and is desperate to come and see for themselves.

Remember, most of God's nation at this point, they don't care about God's word. They're not interested in hearing it, and they wanted Micah silenced, the true preacher. But this is speaking of all nations, of the Gentiles flooding in too.

Micah's preaching of a large-scale conversion among all the nations that goes beyond the borders of Israel. And what's their purpose? It's so that they can hear and obey him.

They're keen to learn his ways and want to live them too. They want to walk in God's paths. They're recognizing that his ways are good and right.

I'm not sure if you saw any of the pictures of the queues outside Premark on Sookie Hall Street just before we moved up to Tier 4, but they were absolutely massive, the queues. Trailing around the streets, people waiting hours.

[13:41] Apparently some people even camped overnight to get that £2 Premark T-shirt they've always wanted before they closed for the unthinkable length of time that was three weeks. Well, have those images in your mind of people flocking, but Micah's prophecy talks of a time when people are flocking, not for £2 T-shirts, but to hear God's word.

Queued around the corner, everyone desperate to come in. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the words of the Lord from Jerusalem. That's why they're coming.

The Lord is speaking. Can you imagine the sight? Billions of people desperate to hear from and obey our God. Isn't it a glorious and beautiful thought?

Well, Micah gives us this picture of a redeemed and faithful Jerusalem living up to its calling and all the nations flowing in to hear what's going on and obey the Lord. Second consequence.

There will be peace. In verse 3. He shall judge between many peoples and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away.

[14:56] And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore.

In these latter days on the horizon, because God's rightfully ruling the earth and his word is going forth, nations are coming to him to solve their problems.

God's going to be known and recognized as the judge. Both the nations far off, so on the other side of the world, and those who look most powerful, the strong nations, will have their wars settled by the Lord as he rules from his mountain.

Peace will finally come to earth. And it's worth noting that true peace only comes about by firstly, the nations giving up their hostility against God and humbly coming to him as they do in verse 3.

That's why they're repurposing their weapons, beating their weapons into farming and fishing tools. Mike is saying that since the Lord is going to establish such perfect peace, well, you might as well turn your rifle into a rake.

[16:10] Well, your gun's no use anymore. Can you imagine what the British army would do? They'd be twiddling their thumbs trying to think of something to do. And the implication is that true peace comes from the Lord and the Lord alone.

Not the United Nations or the President of the USA or our First Minister or our Prime Minister or any other kind of political leader anywhere. Only the Lord brings peace.

So we as Christians shouldn't put too much hope on our political leaders today. Whether it's Brexit or no Brexit, independence or being part of the Union, lockdown or no lockdown, whatever it is, we can't think these issues are going to solve our world's problems.

Only the Lord can do that. And he's clear that it's only going to happen in the latter days when his mountain is established.

That is where our greatest hopes are to be directed. Third consequence. Micah now goes from the global scale and starts to zoom in on the individual.

[17:21] He says that there will be total contentment and satisfaction as the Lord's rule filters down and affects each and every person. Look at verse 4 with me.

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.

This is a very 8th century BC Israel kind of paradise. Relaxing under your vine and your fig tree. A glass of the finest wine and a plate of the most luxurious food.

Even better than McDonald's, I'm told. This is a place of rest, peace and prosperity. You're safe.

You're not worried about any enemies because, well, you're not at war with anyone.

There's no need to be. And you're well provided for. And the they that Micah's referring to are those who have bowed the knee to the Lord and come to him.

[18:25] The Gentiles from among the nations who have come to worship him. Our joy in the here and now is always so fragile, don't you find? It's easily disturbed by something else in this broken world.

It could be over in an instant. Only the Lord establishing his mountain, as he says here in Micah, can bring about lasting peace and joy. Verses 1 to 4 paint this beautiful picture of what the Lord will do in the latter days.

But that's still some way off. So in verse 5, Micah replies to this revelation on Israel's behalf. He's speaking on the behalf of the faithful remnant who have this future to look forward to but aren't quite there yet.

And he says that they're going to live a latter days kind of life, distinctively standing out from everyone around them by remaining faithful to the Lord now. Micah says that the far off future should change the way we act today.

Every nation around them and many people within Israel, within those who call themselves God's people, are living a perverse and sinful way. But Micah commits himself and his repentant hearers to live a latter days life in their current circumstances.

[19:51] Just because the latter days are far off doesn't mean the lifestyle has to be too. 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.

It's not just an impulsive promise. It's a lifetime of faithfulness. Micah's very clear that one of the latter days might be quite some time away.

It should affect the way Israel lives then and there. But how is this great future going to come about? How is God going to make sure that this future comes to be?

That's where we come to our second point in verses 9 of chapter 4 through to 5 of chapter 5. Where we see the promised Messiah. And this section travels through time a little bit.

It speaks of the struggles that Micah's hearers are going to face in the nearer future. We're not speaking about the latter days anymore. We're speaking about a time before then. In the years after Micah preached when Israel's life would be far from peaceful and content.

[21:02] And we're presented with three hopeless looking scenes that find their hope in the Lord's rescue of them. And in each of these we're reminded that despite the Lord's judgment upon his people and the danger they face that he hasn't given up on them and will remain faithful to the

covenant that he's made with them.

These three scenarios each begin with the word now then they depict a scene of judgment for God's people and finish with a gracious deliverance for them.

So scene number one looking at verses 9 and 10. We start with the people crying out to the Lord in distress. Verses 10 to 11 make it sound like the city's under siege that they're under threat of being carted away from Jerusalem torn away from their homes and their families.

And they are beside themselves. And Micah responds to their fear and hysteria with a big dollop of sarcasm. He's saying to them you're screaming out in pain acting like a woman in labor.

So who are you going to turn to? Where's your king? Where's your counselor? Can't you get them to help you? I thought they had excellent treaties and peace resolutions.

[22 : 15] Can't they help you now? Won't that keep you safe? But Micah knows that their leadership is utterly useless. He's made that abundantly clear in the previous chapters.

They're no good for anything except for filling their own pockets and doing what they want. So the people will be taken away from Jerusalem exiled. They will live in Babylon thrown out of God's land in judgment for their sin.

and the situation looks pretty bleak. But that is exactly where God wants them because there only after judgment will he rescue his people.

The verse is quite emphatic about it being there in Babylon. There you'll be rescued. There you'll be redeemed. Strangely, God's gracious deliverance comes through judgment on the people.

It's only when they're in Babylon in enemy territory that the Lord will rescue and redeem them from their enemies. The most unlikely of places was where the Lord would work to rescue his people bringing them back to the land of promise.

[23 : 32] even when things looked about as bleak as they could get and exile was as bleak as it could get. God remains faithful to his word.

Moving on to scene 2 in verses 11 to 13. And now the people are in a grim situation again as they've been surrounded by enemies who are already deciding what they're going to do with Israel once they've been destroyed.

Verse 11. Now many nations are assembled against you saying let her be defiled and let our eyes gaze upon Zion.

Many nations have gathered together to destroy God's people and they're wanting to humiliate Jerusalem. They're already gloating over it before the war has even started. But verse 12 in the words of the Star Wars character Admiral Ackbar it's a trap.

The enemies of God's people don't have a clue what's really going on. Micah says they don't understand that in their attempts to destroy God's people and humiliate them that the Lord is working his will.

[24 : 44] That he will humble his enemies. They might have gathered together in an attempt to overthrow and burn Jerusalem to the ground but the Lord is laughing because they have got no clue what they're actually there for.

He's gathered them there for their destruction like sheaves on the threshing floor. The threshing floor was an open area outside the city where leftover grain was to be chopped up and ground down reduced to nothing.

And that's what Israel would do with their enemies. She would have bronze hoofs so that she could grind them down and keep the spoil for the Lord for him to gaze on in their humiliation when their pride comes crashing down.

Even when the whole world seemed to be set against God's people, he was still faithful to his promises and would protect his remnant. Moving on to scene three from five verse one to the first half of verse five.

Now Israel have found themselves in a sticky situation. Again, it keeps on happening. Verse one, they've got to get their troops ready to go because they're under siege and their judge, their ruler, has been struck down.

[26 : 02] His rod, a symbol of his strength, has been taken away and used against him to his shame. They find themselves kingless and defenseless against an unknown yet threatening enemy.

But the Lord was going to bring hope from the most unlikely of places. Verse two, but you, O Bethlehem Ephrata, 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 old, from ancient days.

Israel's hope doesn't come from their capital city, not from where you think it would. Instead, it comes from an insignificant, small, unimportant town in Judah that you wouldn't take much notice of.

That is the place where God's glorious plan is coming from. But Bethlehem does have some recent history for the Israelites. This was the town where King David was born, where his royal line began. So if you were taking the open top bus tour of Judah, it wouldn't necessarily be somewhere you'd get out at, but the tour guide would mention as he drove through Bethlehem that it was the birthplace of a king, not much else going on.

[27 : 33] Well, all that's going to change because a ruler was to come from there, a ruler from old, from ancient days. He's not like anyone else they've seen before.

And in these few verses, God is speaking himself. So when he says that a ruler comes forth for me, it tells us that this is God's king.

It's his special, appointed, long-hoped-for Messiah who will bring about God's plans for the world. He's going to rule as the faithful king, shepherding in the Lord's strength and ruling in his name. He'll be the perfect king that Israel was hoping for. And the result of that is perfect peace. He will be their shepherd, strongly protecting them against the many nations assembled against them. And verse four, they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, and he shall be their peace.

[28 : 39] of course we know standing on this side of Christ's coming, that this is the Lord Jesus himself that Mike is talking about, prophesied of in the Old Testament, in one of the readings we hear every Christmas at our carols and lessons by candlelight.

And I think now that we've read that, it's officially time that we can actually celebrate Christmas. I'm getting my tree tomorrow, I'm not ashamed of it at all. But it's helpful for us to see that in this context, Mike is saying that the one born in Bethlehem, the ruler who will bring perfect peace to the Lord's people, the Lord Jesus, he is the chapter 4 latter days man.

He's the one who's going to bring about God's perfect peace for his people and be the everlasting king promised to David's royal family. God will keep his promises that he's made with his people. He's the covenant God. He keeps his word, he's good for it. Israel were about to experience a time of great hardship and troubles. That's what each of these three scenes predicted.

They were going to be exiled, torn away from their homes because of their sin. But Micah had real purpose in sharing this with the people.

[29 : 59] This section was built to remind them that there's a future beyond that pain. There is hope. And very importantly, that God hasn't forgotten them.

The Lord remembers his covenant promises with his people and he knew that great David's greater son would be the one to establish the perfect, peaceful kingdom forever through his rule.

Israel was to remember that even when things were at their darkest, that the Lord is still in the business of keeping his promises. And he's always going to deliver his faithful remnant, those who belong to him, in faith.

They were to look ahead, to look to the horizon, knowing what's coming before they get there. And remember that the Lord is sovereign over all of it.

He knows what he's doing. Well, so far, Micah said that the latter days of chapter 4 are coming through the peace brought by the Messiah in chapter 5.

[31 : 08] And he now goes on to explain in verses 5 to 15 what his people are going to be like in the messianic age when the Messiah is on the throne. That's what we see in the following verses.

Micah's explaining the people of the Messiah. When the Messiah reigns, his people will be protected, they'll be powerful, and they'll be made pure.

Verses 5 and 6 show that they're going to be protected. Now, Assyria was the big bad of the day, the intimidating war machine that had the whole Middle East quaking in their boots.

And Micah says that because the Messiah is on the throne, even when Israel's worst fear, the worst thing they could possibly ever imagine, the great Assyrian army comes into their land, they're not bothered.

worried. They're not worried about it. It's a poetic look at how Israel would feel when confronted with their worst fears. In verse 6, it talks of them feeling like they've got an incredibly strong defense and attack.

[32 : 18] These shepherds and princes of men would both protect God's people and destroy God's enemies. enemies. But notice what it says about the messianic people's dominance halfway through verse 6.

It's not they, as in the shepherds and princes who will ensure this, but he, as in the Messiah himself. Only he will sustain the ongoing peace for his people.

The messianic king is himself the true deliverer. You might think that calling the Messiah the one who brings peace is a bit of a misnomer since he destroys Assyria, but it has to be recognized that peace only comes through enemies either submitting or being dealt with.

There's always that side of the coin when peace is concerned. Sometimes peace has to come by force. Next, verses 7 to 9 teach us that the messianic people will be powerful.

Verse 7 says that the people of Israel will be like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass. This is a positive aspect of God's people living among all the peoples of the earth.

[33 : 36] The remnant of Jacob, true Israel, will be a blessing to the peoples, like dew or showers, bringing life and refreshing those around them.

For instance, there's quite a few people here today or maybe watching online, and they're only here because someone in our church family has shared the gospel with them, and they've turned to Christ in response.

Can you think of a greater blessing for your friend or family member than the gift of life through Christ? It's the greatest gift you can give someone, and it's a blessing to the nations as we're living among them.

But there's a contrast in verses 8 and 9 as we see the devastating effect of God's powerful people. They're described as being, verse 8, like a lion among beasts that it can easily devour.

We might be less keen on this description of God's people, but it's just as true as the blessing the Lord brings through us. To some, we are the aroma of life, but to others, the aroma of death.

[34 : 48] Our presence as we proclaim the word of the Lord, as we have the word of the Lord going forth from our church and in our lives, it's a double-edged sword. For while us extending the gospel to them might bring great blessing to them, if they reject the Lord, they're bringing judgment upon themselves through their hatred of the Lord.

We are both a blessing and a dangerous people. And finally, verses 10 to 15 show that the Messianic people will be pure.

Look through these verses and see all that the Lord is cutting off from his people. Verse 10, he's cutting off their horses, their chariots, the cities of their lands, and all their strongholds.

He's cutting off all of their military strength. Verse 12, he will cut off all their sorceries, their fortune tellers, their carved images, and their idolatrous shrines.

He's cutting off everything that could lead them towards idolatry. The Lord's cutting off anything that the people might be tempted to put their hope in other than him.

[36 : 03] He's destroying the things that distract this people from him so that they'll be pure, to keep them faithful to him. God will finally have a pure people to serve and love him.

No longer tempted to put their trust in anything else. They'll be loyal to him and him alone. That's what the Messiah will achieve in his people.

They'll finally look like God's special treasured possession, shining a light out to all the nations. Now when we think about how we apply this today, before we get to 21st century Glasgow, we need to remember Micah's two audiences in Israel 700 BC.

He's preaching to God's covenant community, but they're made up of two groups. On the one hand, a deeply sinful, unrepentant, idolatrous people, and on the other, a faithful remnant who belong to the Lord.

And he's preaching this message to both of them at the same time. So how does it apply to both parties? Well, Micah's message to the faithful community within Israel is this, the faithless community within Israel.

[37 : 19] You will not be a part of this future. You will not be a part of this messianic people unless you repent.

The blessings are not yours to enjoy. They're like a child who has abandoned and hated their family, so it's written out of the will.

It's sobering and worrying, but it's true. Those who look like they belong to the Lord in name, but not in heart, have a horrible fate coming for them.

Micah cuts down the hopes of the day that people wrongly put their trust in, the human powers, the armies, the idols, and says that none of them are going to deliver them. There is only real hope through the Lord and his ruler.

Trust in him. And Micah's message to the faithful remnant is this. You will face difficult times, but fix your eyes on the hope to come.

[38 : 29] Fix your eyes on the glorious future that God has in store for you. And will ensure it is coming to you through great David's greater son. So keep going.

He knows what he's doing. There are a lot of competing hopes around at the moment, aren't there? In bleak times like the COVID world we're living in now, we're all looking for something good to look forward to, so we're latching on to something hopeful.

I find myself doing that more and more, don't you? Maybe it's a very idyllic Christmas day spent with loved ones, or maybe you work in a hospital and you just can't wait to never hear the word COVID again.

Or maybe you're hoping for a vaccine to be rolled out so you'll be able to do normal things like going out for dinner without having to filter it through, can you, can you do this, all the regulations you have to go through.

Can you imagine just being able to live life without restrictions? Normality seems weirdly exciting right now, the bar's quite low. But we as Christians must be shaped in what we think, what we feel, and what we do by the word of the Lord in our lives.

[39 : 43] So our great hopes ought to be aligned with what God wants. Because for all the hope and celebration that the labs at Oxford, Pfizer, or Moderna give, realistically at best, it just means you're less likely to die of one thing, that something else is going to get you soon.

Our government and our world might be holding this vaccine out as our great hope, but we have to see it for what it is. Yes, if it's something that protects life, we thank the Lord for it.

But it's such a thin hope in comparison with what we read here. Don't you find that? We have something much more meaty and so much better to look forward to as Christians with far better than 70, 90, or 95% certainty.

The future is completely 100% secure, and we can't have our eyes taken away from it. We can't get distracted by the lesser hopes of this world, but must remain distinctive, holding out the hope that we have as Christians, as people who know the ruler from of old, who are united to him, the one who brings peace.

People outside the church might be walking in the name of their gods, but we must answer with Micah and say that we will walk in the name of the Lord, our God, forever and ever.

[41 : 20] And we can do that particularly because we have a clearer and bigger picture than what Micah shared with his people at the time. We know that the mountain of the Lord is an Old Testament vision of the new creation to come, and we've seen the ruler from Bethlehem, the Messiah coming in the flesh, in the form of the Lord Jesus.

He's not just a promise, he's a person, and we've seen him, he's come. We've seen evidence of the Lord's promises being kept by seeing the ruler from Bethlehem come.

So the mountain of the Lord, the new creation, well we know it's coming. The hope is real. So let me ask you this, how much of your week have you spent thinking about the hope we have as Christians?

How much time have you spent thinking about the glorious future that we have in store for us? Has it affected the way you've lived, the way you've thought, the way you felt this week?

Belonging to the Lord should impact every fiber of our being, and our hopes are a significant part of that. They're deeply motivating and directing things.

[42 : 46] That's why we need to see the world's hopes for what they are. Seeing how thin and uncertain they are. And instead fix our eyes on the hope that Micah preaches of, the sure hope, the certain hope that we find in the Messiah.

And that isn't something that just remains a nice feeling we have or something to look forward to, but something that shapes all we do today. today. And it should help us view the troubles of today with godly perspective, remaining faithful today.

That's why Micah wanted to give his hearers this message. He wanted them to have great hope for the future, which in turn would help them live faithful lives today.

And we as people who belong to the Messiah should be striving to do the same. 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.

Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Lord and Father, we thank you for giving us, your people, a glorious hope to look forward to.

[44 : 21] Please forgive us when we put our hope in the wrong place. Help us not to become like the people around us whose hope lies in such shallow things, but help us to trust in you.

help us to look forward to the coming of your kingdom. And please make us very thankful for your son, the Messiah you sent to bring about your kingdom.

In his name we pray. Amen.