

# In That Day

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, it would be great if you could turn in your Bibles back to Micah chapter 4 that Ben read for us. Being on page 930, there's also an outline in your pew sheets.

I don't think we're going to make it through at all, but we'll see how we go. I'm pretty sure you've all heard the expression, the light at the end of the tunnel. People have heard this expression, have you?

Yep, yep. The light at the end of the tunnel often helps us to persevere through the tunnel, doesn't it? Different tunnels in life. And so just recently, many of you know that my son went through his VCE exams.

And before that, for his belated 18th birthday, we bought him a really good computer, which he chipped in for, and on which he could play games with his friends.

They put their headsets on and all that sort of thing. And on which he will do university work next year. As well. But it came quite quickly, surprisingly quickly.

[ 1 : 0 0 ] And so it sat in my study in its big box, just waiting for him to finish. And occasionally, I would catch him walking past my study, pausing and just gazing at this box.

And that light at the end of his tunnel helped him to keep persevering through his exams. And as we come to Micah today, I think that's the big idea of chapters 4 and 5.

For Micah, the light is not a computer. It's God's future kingdom. And the perseverance is not studying for exams, which are hard.

It's following Christ through difficult times. Following Christ, or as Micah puts it in chapter 4, verse 5. Just have a look in your Bibles at chapter 4, verse 5. We didn't read this verse, but it's the bottom of the page.

Micah writes, What does it mean to walk in the name of God?

[ 2 : 0 9 ] Well, it means to reflect his character. I mean, names are attached to character, aren't they? Have you heard that other expression, to drag a person's name through the mud? And it's to drag their character through the mud because name is attached to character.

And so to walk in the name of the Lord is to walk in light of his character. Which means walking in a way that reflects his character with our behavior, you know, in our words and actions.

But also walking in a way that reflects his character for who he is, that is God, over our lives. And so impacting our choices and priorities.

And for Micah, no matter what happens out there in the world, or for what happens out there for us here in Melbourne, he is committed to walking in the name of the Lord, his God.

But it's not always easy, as we know. And yet there are lots of things that can help. Things like help from one another to encourage us. And we heard that from James' testimony today.

[ 3 : 1 5 ] One of the things that helped him was meeting with God's people. And then there's, of course, God's spirit who strengthens us. But today, Micah gives us a glimpse of that glorious light at the end of the tunnel.

God's future kingdom to help him persevere through the dark tunnel. And we know it's about his future kingdom because there's this repeated refrain in our two chapters of, in the last days or in that day.

And it kind of joins our two chapters together. But it speaks of a future day, end times, when God will do something. Of course, for us, the last days, it's a little bit different for Micah.

I don't know if you can see this on the screen. But the last days refer to the time between Jesus' first coming or advent to save and his second coming or advent to judge and restore.

And in fact, in the Old Testament, that day singular is actually stretched out in the New Testament. At the morning of that one day is Jesus' first coming.

[ 4 : 18 ] And the evening, you know, with the judgment day is Jesus' second coming. And so we are actually in the last days or that day now. Which means as we look at Micah's future, we'll see some of it fulfilled already in our present.

I'll show you along the way. Just to reorientate you, the book of Micah is made up of three sermons and we're still in the middle of the second one. We looked at chapter three last week at those lousy leaders, if you remember, who were like shepherds who ate their own sheep.

And Micah got quite graphic, if you remember. And this week we're continuing in that middle sermon. And what we'll see is actually a reversal.

And so we're going to pick it up at chapter three, verse 12, the end of last week. And notice the reversal of the temple as we read from chapter three, verse 12 to chapter four, verse one.

Therefore, because of you lousy leaders, Zion will be ploughed like a field. Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble. The temple hill, a mound overgrown with thickets.

[ 5 : 32 ] But in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains. It will be exalted above the hills and people will stream to it.

Did you notice the reversal here? The temple was on a hill. Now, in the last days, it will be exalted to the highest mountain. Before, it was overgrown with thickets because it was deserted of people. But chapter four, verse one, in the last days, it will be flooded with streams of people. There's this reversal, you see. Although these people are just from the nations at the moment.

Verse two. And many nations will come and say, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of God, of Jacob. He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.

For the law will go out from Zion. The word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Many nations, we're told, will come to the temple because that was the place you met God.

[ 6 : 38 ] And they will come to God and learn from God so that they can walk in God's ways. How will this happen? Well, there's a missing word in our NIV.

Halfway through verse two, or towards the end of verse two, actually, it should say, because or for the law will go out from Zion, which is another way of saying the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. This word will go out and bring people from the nations back in to meet God and learn from God. In fact, this word will do more than that.

It will settle disputes so that there is peace in the world. Verse three and four. God will judge between many peoples and he will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

And so there'll be peace to the point they'll beat their swords into farming equipment like plowshares. They don't need their spears. So they'll put them into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

[ 7 : 46 ] Instead, everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree and no one will make them afraid. For the Lord Almighty has spoken.

You know about these beauty pageants that they have from time to time. Sometimes you see them in movies and whenever they interview the contestant, they always ask them, what do you wish to see in the world?

And they always invariably say world peace. They always say that, isn't it? Well, here it is in Mark chapter four. In the last days, there will be world peace.

No more need for weapons. Spears to pruning hooks. Or perhaps for, in our terms, tanks to tractors and the like. Everyone will be able to enjoy their own vine and fig tree without fear of being invaded by Putin or someone else.

Plus, did you notice everyone will walk in God's way too? Can you imagine that? Not only when you turn on the news, there's only good news.

[ 8 : 53 ] No war anymore. But everyone is walking in God's way. Our politicians, our neighbours, our relatives. Not just saying they have faith, but living it out.

What a day that would be. No more selfishness or corruption, but genuine love and compassion. And this is not just wishful thinking, this future day.

Because at the end of verse four, it's guaranteed by God. Do you notice how it says? At the end of verse four, because, this is going to happen, because, the Lord Almighty has spoken.

He's signed the contract, as it were. Plus, he has the muscle to follow through. The words, Lord Almighty, the word Almighty there is literally the Lord of hosts, of armies.

He has the military muscle to make this happen. And in fact, it's already begun. Because has not Christ replaced the temple as the place we go to meet God?

[ 9 : 56 ] And has not Christ been exalted to the highest place? And has not the word of the gospel gone out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth?

That's what we see in the book of Acts. To bring many from the nations in to walk God's way as Christians. And has not this world also brought some measure of peace between people? Such that a Ukrainian Christian and a Russian Christian, despite their country's conflict, still have peace and fellowship with one another. Of course, this future is not fully fulfilled yet, is it? Sadly, there's still plenty of conflict. But in Christ, God's future kingdom with the temple and the nations has already begun to be fulfilled.

But what about Jerusalem and the Jews? Well, that comes next in verse 6 and 7. He says, Here is the next reversal from the end of chapter 3.

[ 11 : 27 ] Zion, do you remember, end of chapter 3 was ploughed like a field. As I said last week, a plough uproots the soil. And so the people of Jerusalem were uprooted and sent to exile. But here, God will regather his exiles.

And notice he'll make the lame strong, into a strong nation. And God will rule over them forever. There's the Jews. What about Jerusalem?

Well, verse 8. As for you, watchtower of the flock, that is Jerusalem, stronghold of daughter Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you. Kingship will come to daughter Jerusalem.

Before, at the end of chapter 3, Jerusalem was turned to rubble. But later, in that day, God will restore its dominion. It will again be a watchtower or a stronghold for its people around.

And kingship will return to the city. A king that is way better than those lousy leaders from last week. And God will rule through this king forever.

[ 12 : 36 ] Here is God's future kingdom. A restored city, temple, people, both Jews and nations, and their king. Through whom God's rule and word will bring world peace.

It will be heaven on earth. But it's just hard for us to imagine how good it will be, isn't it? And so I actually googled heaven on earth. And this is what came up on Google.

How nice is that place? It's in Austria. It's a rural place. And in fact, it even has life under a tree. I don't know if that's a fig tree.

But there it is, a cafe, drinking coffee under the tree, looking out with that view. That's pretty nice, isn't it? That's almost heaven on earth. Perhaps for families with kids, if that's you, heaven on earth looks like this.

All playing nicely together. Smiling. No more fighting. But for Micah, this kingdom is completely in the future. And for now, says Micah, for his people is just the pain of judgment.

[ 13 : 46 ] Point two. What follows are three paragraphs where in the Hebrew, they all begin with the word now. But we can still notice the word now as I read.

So have a look at the first paragraph, verse 9 and 10. There's a now and later pattern. So verse 9. Why do you now cry aloud? Have you no king?

Has your ruler perished? That pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor? Writhe in agony, daughter Zion, like a woman in labor. For now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. You will go to Babylon. But later there, you will be rescued. There the Lord will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies.

I remember some years ago, I pinched a nerve in my lower back. And if you've ever had that, you know it's excruciating, right? You can't walk.

[ 14 : 43 ] You just can't sleep. It's really painful. And I made the mistake of saying to my wife, Michelle, I reckon I now know what labor is like. She just stared at me as if to say, you have no idea.

And she was right. I have no idea of labor and no idea that you never say that. All I know is in labor, there's pain, lots of pain. And Micah says, for now, Judah, there will be pain like labor.

The pain of judgment. In verse 9, I think Micah is actually mocking the people who trusted in their human king. Even though they led them away from their divine king.

And so I think what Micah is saying in verse 9, why do you now cry out? Have you no king to save you? I thought you trusted in this guy. Has he perished? Why don't you go and cry to him? Of course, because of their sin, their king cannot save them.

And so Micah says then in verse 10, actually, you're right to writhe in pain like a woman in labor. For now is the time of judgment and exile to Babylon.

[ 15 : 59 ] Judgment that Micah and the faithful will be caught up in. But just as from the pain of labor comes new life later, so from the pain of judgment will come new life later.

So you see the end of verse 10? From Babylon, they will be rescued. They will be redeemed. God will give them new life.

And we see the same pattern in verses 11 to 13. Have a look in your Bibles there at verse 11 to start with. He says, Yet verse 12, Just for those who don't know what a threshing floor is, this is like an ancient one.

They'd have a circle with stones around it, and they throw their sheaves of grain into it, and they'd either whack them on the ground, or they'd get animals to tread out the grain, which is where that expression comes from.

And so later in verse 13, God will raise his people up, and not only give them new life, but give them hooves of bronze to tread out the nations, like those who gloated over them, to judge them justly.

[ 17 : 24 ] Or the third paragraph where we see the same pattern, chapter 5, verse 1 and 2. In verse 1, chapter 5, verse 1, notice, Marshal your troops when? Now.

For the city is under siege. A siege I suspect they'll lose, because their human ruler will be struck on the cheek, captured and carried off, just as Zedekiah was by Babylon.

But later, chapter 5, verse 2, from insignificant Bethlehem will come the ruler of Israel, a king whose origins are from old, from ancient times, like the time of King David.

For David himself was from Bethlehem. And God promised David, a king from his family would always rule in God's kingdom. This now and later helps Micah's faithful persevere in the present, in two ways, actually.

First, helping them to have right expectations of now. I remember visiting someone, and the kids were complaining about homework, and the mother said, well, God never promised an easy life.

[ 18 : 37 ] Off you go. Wasn't very sympathetic, but she was right. This life is never promised to be easy. And sometimes our frustrations come because we've got wrong expectations of this life.

We expect it should always be easy. But God doesn't promise that. Part of God's judgment for sin is living in a fallen world, which we often get caught up in, don't we?

Whether it's suffering from people's selfishness. I said to the morning congregation that I was crossing the road just down here after voting yesterday. I had the green man, I was walking across the road, and a car just tore around the corner.

I had about a metre clearance, so my life didn't flash before my eyes. But, you know, a metre with a fast car, I could have caught up, been caught up with that suffering from people's selfishness, couldn't I?

Or people get caught up with natural disasters or ageing bodies, the effects of a fallen world. We can still lament and do what we can to avoid those things.

[ 19 : 44 ] That's right. But if we have right expectations of life now, then it won't frustrate us no end when they come. We can brace ourselves for it, help each other through it, and not be knocked over by it.

We can remember that this world is not our true home. Of course, God hates suffering and injustice even more than we do. And so, second, God's promise of later here gives hope, doesn't it?

Not only right expectations now, but hope for later. Light at the end of the tunnel, that from the pain of labour will come new life, where God will rescue and redeem.

Give them a king, and one day they will even judge those nations who persecuted them. This later hope, this future light at the end of the tunnel, helps them to keep walking in the name of the Lord.

But it all revolves around an actual woman giving birth to an actual child. Verse 3, chapter 5, verse 3. Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she, who is in labour, bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

[ 21 : 03 ] That is when God's future kingdom begins. That is when the pain of judgment ends, when this child is born.

For then God will begin to redeem and rescue. Then he'll begin to restore his brothers from Judah, who will return or repent, the word means both things, and join the rest of God's people, the Israelites.

You see, God's future kingdom all revolves around this child, this son, who is born king. All their hopes hang on him.

And the great news is that child has already been born, hasn't he? It's Christmas, isn't it? As we heard in our second reading, the chief priests referred to Micah, chapter 5, verse 2.

They don't quote it exactly, but they refer to it. And that's why we'll sing a little bit later, O little town of Bethlehem, which has that line, the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you, Bethlehem, tonight.

[ 22 : 05 ] Because you, Bethlehem, Ephethra, from you will come a ruler who will begin to bring in God's future kingdom.

Which means because Jesus has already been born from David's line, then God has already begun to rescue and redeem to bring us into the kingdom of his son.

By repenting or returning to Jesus, we too become his spiritual brothers and sisters. We too can join true Israel. And one day he will even raise us up to judge the world with him.

As Paul says in Corinthians, don't you know the Lord's people will judge the world? Perhaps not with bronze hooves though. The point is some of this later has already been fulfilled in our now, in Christ, which means God's future kingdom is even more certain.

And it means we have already started to enjoy the good life under him, his shepherd king. Point three, verse four. Have a look at verse four. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord, his God.

[ 23 : 33 ] Since Jesus has already been born, I'm sorry, and they will live securely for then his greatness will reach the ends of the earth. And so the first aspect of life under this king is a secure life, which has already begun for us spiritually.

As Jesus says in John's gospel, he is the good shepherd and no one can snatch us from God's hand because God is greater than all. And Jesus rules in the strength of God.

One of our members loves these verses on the screen from John 10. They used to go to a church which never spoke of assurance. God and so he was never sure if he was going to heaven, even though he genuinely trusted in Jesus.

Then he read these verses that under this shepherd we have security, that no one can snatch us from his hands and it brought him such relief, especially now that he's only been given weeks to live.

Life under this shepherd is good. It comes with spiritual security. It comes with peace through victory and all those other things I've listed on your outline, but we're running out of time.

[ 24 : 51 ] So let me finish. For Micah, God's future kingdom, this heaven on earth, this light at the end of the tunnel helped him persevere in the present.

It helped him and the faithful to keep walking in the name of the Lord. But it was all in the future. For us, it has already begun to be fulfilled, some of it in our present.

And so we have even more reason to be confident that God's future kingdom will fully come. And so even more reason to keep walking in the name of the Lord.

My son Tim is now enjoying his new computer and loving it. The perseverance has paid off. His glorious future was worth it.

Well, until his parents force him to get a job in a couple of weeks time. But knowing God's glorious kingdom to come will be worth it, knowing that it actually has already begun, it's certain, does that not give us even more reason to keep walking in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ?

[ 26 : 02 ] Let's pray we would. Let's pray. God's love. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you for this picture of your future kingdom from Micah.

Thank you even more so that in Christ it has begun to be fulfilled. And so we pray that this light at the end of the tunnel which is already broken into our world might encourage us to persevere in the present, to keep walking in the name of our Lord Jesus who died and rose again.

For we ask it in his name. Amen.