

*Preparing for Christmas
with Micah*

Hope is a strange word - Micah Chapter 4, 1-5





Charlie had a dream – a hope

Charlie had a dream

-
- ... but on the day of the big race a storm blew in
 - A thousand birds were swept away
 - But what is wrong with having a dream ... a hope?

*In the West End of Derby lives a working man
He says "I can't fly but me pigeons can
And when I set them free
It's just like part of me
Gets lifted up on shining wings"*

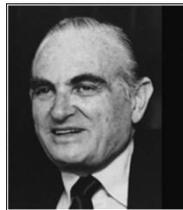


We all have hopes

- For this world, this life, for money, wellbeing, our children, a sunny day ...
- For stable government ... for peace

“In the factory we make cosmetics, but in the store we sell hope!”

Charles Revson, Founder, Revlon



Hope is a strange word

- Most hopes will fail
- What's the common idea behind hope? that there is something better to come



In Charlie's case

*"Charlie we told you so.
Surely by now you know.
When you're living in te' West End
there ain't many dreams come true"*

*"Yeah, I know, but I had to try
A man can crawl around or he can learn to fly
And if you live 'round 'ere
The ground seems awful near"*



“A man can crawl around ... or he can learn to fly!”

- Wouldn't it be great if ... our hopes and dreams simply came true!
- Nothing wrong with “hoping for stuff” BUT ...
- This is a mistaken way of looking at today's passage on hope as we start to think about Christmas
- ... written 800 years before the very first Christmas



What happened in Micah Chapters 1-3

We are joining the story half way in
- what happened in chapters 1-3?

- Micah condemns Israel's leaders
- Micah condemns false prophets of God
- Micah prophesies that Israel and Jerusalem will get flattened

BUT THEN



MICAH CHAPTER 4 The mountain of the LORD

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 peoples will stream to it.

² Many nations will come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain
of the LORD,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.'
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

³ He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes
for strong nations far and wide.
They will beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war any more.

⁴ 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.

⁵ All the nations may walk
in the name of their gods,
but we will walk in the name of the LORD
our God for ever and ever.

What did it mean for them?

3 things



1. There is a picture of “God’s mountain”

- God’s presence is lifted up
- People GOING flooding to God
- People SAYING “let’s worship God and learn his ways”
- People LIVING in a peaceful world!

*The mountain of the LORD’s temple
will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
.....*

*² Many nations will come and say,
‘Come, let us go up to the mountain
of the LORD,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways’*

2. There is a new order

- A worldwide peace
- God arbitrates among his people
- Nations live in harmony with each other
- Weapons of death transformed to instruments of life

*He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong
nations far and wide.
They will beat their swords into
ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against
nation,
nor will they train for war any more.*

3 A life to look forward to!

- There are benefits of this new order
- Every person enjoys the fruits of their labour without fear
- Not coveting each other's possessions but content with a modest lifestyle

*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.*

**Well this all
sounds
great, but
*When?***

The double meaning of OT prophecy (This prophecy will be fulfilled twice)

- FIRST time
 - Israel will be almost annihilated over the next 2-3 hundred years
 - But eventually they will return and rebuild
- SECOND time
 - “In the last days” of history there will come a Messiah
 - Then there will be a much more intense fulfilment
 - the Christian Hope

What does it mean for us?



The Christian Hope

- Micah was not only prophesying to ancient Israel
- But his Word applies to us –a picture of our future
- This Christian Hope was inaugurated by the coming of Jesus
- Bringing hope into a world without hope



The Christian Hope

- Is not about being hopeful
- Jesus' Incarnation – Crucifixion – Resurrection changed human history
- Christian Hope is not about being hopeful that something will happen.
It's about being certain that something **has happened**



What exactly is this Christian Hope?

1. God will raise the dead

- We take this seriously because we know that God is both
 - All powerful
 - And all loving
- Central to the Christian Hope



What exactly is this Christian Hope?

2. There WILL be a new order

- The language of Christian Hope is language stretched to its limits ...
- It's everything that Micah says – no more war, struggle, or fear – God's final victory
- But then the Bible resorts to rich symbolism
 - A place of eternal peace!
 - A wedding feast!
 - A new City!
- Take it seriously – but not over-literally



What exactly is this Christian Hope?

3. It was ushered in by the birth and death of Jesus

- Jesus would have known these words of Micah and their double fulfilment
- Nearly time to celebrate his **birth** – but his **death** makes this hope real
- It's not just that Jesus knew the prophecy, or lived a good life
- But it was at that moment as Jesus died on a cross, that the hopes of creation were fulfilled



How then should we
respond?



Purveyors of hope

- The Universe is progressing towards an eternal goal ...
- Christian Hope starts now ... but will complete later

But right now!

- We are to be suppliers of hope in a hope-less world
- Hope can come in many forms
 - even Charlie had a surprise coming!



Purveyors of hope

- We should be signs of hope and support signs of hope around us
- Hope starts now - we don't sit around waiting for it to start
- We are to bring hope into situations of injustice, poverty and need
- And when we bring hope today we bring a sign of the eternal "not yet" hope



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