

## The Millennial Glory of the Church #1

Micah 4:1; Isaiah 2:2

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God has not given us His prophetic Scripture in order that we might simply satisfy our speculative curiosity about the future. God has given us His prophetic Word in order that we might know that He is the God of history, and that He governs all of history (by His most holy, wise, and powerful providence) for His own glory and for the good of His church. Prophecy in Scripture exalts the Lord of glory, abases the pride of man, casts man upon the grace and mercy of Christ, and reveals the sanctifying work of God's Spirit in bringing the church from infancy to maturity (by means of both trial and blessing).

One of the great themes found in prophetic literature is that of the millennium—a period of unprecedented gospel blessing promised to God's People, both Jews and Gentiles. "Millennium" is the Latin form of the number 1,000 and is taken from Revelation 20:4.

Although there have been various millennial positions represented in the history of the church, in the sermon this Lord's Day and in the sermon next Lord's Day, I will be focusing my attention upon the millennial position professed by this church, by godly and learned teachers of the First and Second Reformations, and most importantly the millennial position taught in Micah 4:1 (as in all of Scripture): Historic Postmillennialism. In testifying that Historic Postmillennialism is the position taught in Scripture, I also testify against the following unbiblical millennial positions, namely, Premillennialism and Amillennialism.

In summarizing the Postmillennial position, I cite for you the following main truths from Scripture:

1. Christ's Second Coming will occur after the millennium.
2. The Lord will destroy Antichrist just prior to the millennium.
3. Satan will be bound by Christ for a 1,000 prophetic years so that he cannot deceive the nations any longer.
4. Through faithful gospel preaching, many nations of the world (Paul calls this "the fullness of the Gentiles" in Romans 11:25) will be brought to submit to Christ, and the ancient people of God, Israel, will likewise be brought into the Church of Christ (Romans 11:26).
5. Finally, Christ will reign from heaven (and not physically upon the earth) and will pour out His Spirit upon the world in such an unprecedented manner that the nations of the world will learn war no more.

In the next two weeks, these points will hopefully become clearer. This Lord's Day we shall consider the following main points from our text in Micah 4:1: (1) The Time of the Church's Glory; (2) The Church's Glorious Exaltation; (3) The Church's Glorious Increase.

This Lord's Day we continue our study in the prophecy of Micah and we turn from the judgment God had prophesied to come upon His people for their false doctrine, corrupt worship, and despicable oppression of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow (in Micah 3:12) to a study of God's rich mercy as He comforts His people with promises concerning a time of future blessing (note the contrast emphasized in the word "But" in Micah 4:1).

Dear ones, the Lord is indeed holy in all His fierce judgments (He is to be feared above all angels, men, and circumstances), however He is also most gracious even in the midst of times of intense discipline upon His backslidden church in lifting the eyes of the faithful from the present trials to future blessings. In fact, God's discipline (even intense and severe discipline) is intended to drive His faithful remnant to the mercy and grace

of Christ where God comforts and encourages us with His fatherly promises (Hebrews 12:5,6,10,11). His anger is but for a moment, whereas His mercy endures forever. Thus, the church passes from visible ashes in Micah 3:12 to visible glory in Micah 4:1.

#### **I. The Time of the Church's Glory ("But in the last days it shall come to pass" Micah 4:1).**

A. To what period of time in the future does this prophecy look?

1. The phrase "the last days" as used in the New Testament refers in a general sense to the entire New Testament period between Christ's First and Second Comings (e.g. Hebrews 1:2).

2. However, it is also true that "the last days" may refer to a very specific period of time between the First and Second Comings of Christ (e.g. 1 Timothy 4:1 which seems to have in mind that specific period of time when the popish Antichrist will reign in the world).

3. As we consider when this prophecy in Micah 4 will be realized, it is important to raise the following questions:

a. When will the visible church be gloriously exalted and increased by a vast majority of all nations flooding to it to be taught by Christ through faithful ministers (per Micah 4:1-2; Isaiah 2:2-3)?

b. When will many nations of this world cease to learn war and enjoy the fruits of the gospel of peace in both the civil and ecclesiastical sphere (per Micah 4:3-4; Isaiah 2:4)?

4. As we observe events in history, there certainly have been times of great reformation (as in the First and Second Reformations) in which nations did covenant to be the Lord's people (e.g. National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League & Covenant of the three kingdoms). However, such periods of reformation, although glorious in what was accomplished for the cause of Christ, were both short-lived and limited to a few nations.

5. Furthermore, although the gospel has been preached in many nations throughout the world, there has not been a time when many nations ("all nations" Isaiah 2:2) in their national capacity turned in covenanted faithfulness to Christ.

6. Moreover, we have not lived to see the worldwide effect of the gospel in the nations of this world so that wars have ceased for any significant length of time. The United Nations continues efforts to bring about a one world government as a result of political alliances, and although the civil beast and the ecclesiastical beast of Revelation 13 will manifest this global unity to a greater degree than they have done to this point, such a one world government will not be the effect of the gospel of salvation.

7. Thus, I submit to you that we have not yet seen the realization of this prophecy in Micah 4. We are yet to see this prophecy fulfilled in the future.

B. In order to put this prophecy in Micah 4 within its proper time of fulfillment, let us compare this prophecy with other prophetic portions of Scripture.

1. Daniel 7:15-27 (cf. "the little horn" of Daniel 7 with "the man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) indicates it will be after the destruction of the popish antichrist (in Daniel 7:26) that the millennial reign of the saints will be established in its glory. It was in 754 A.D. that the papacy (i.e. "little horn" of Daniel 7: 24) subdued the third of the three kingdoms, the Lombards (having previously conquered the Heruli and the Ostrogoths). This argues against the Preterist position which looks to the first century for the fulfillment of these prophecies.

2. Revelation 11:15 speaks of the same period of millennial blessing when after 1260 prophetic days (also called "a time, times, and dividing of a time" or 3 1/2 years, or 42 months) the millennium will be established. When did the 1260 years begin? In 606 A.D. Emperor Phocas declared Boniface III, Bishop of Rome, Head of the universal church; in 756 A.D. Pope Stephen was invested with the civil dominion of the papal states in Rome by Pepin, the father of Charlemagne; in 800 A.D. Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne

Emperor of the Romans and who was the father of the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, by 756 A.D., the pope had usurped the title of supreme head of the church (thus causing the church to have 2 heads—Jesus Christ and the Pope of Rome) and had also assumed the role of supreme political leader of the papal states in Rome and by 800 A.D. Western Europe was generally united under one emperor.

3. Revelation 20:1-10 also declares that after the destruction of the popish antichrist (Revelation 19:20) the millennium will begin to flourish.

4. When the Romish Church with all her harlot daughter will have been destroyed, then will Christ set up the millennial glory of the church in “the last days” as prophesied in Micah 4:1. Neither the Premillennial position nor the Amillennial position sees such a glorious and conspicuous time of gospel prosperity before the Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 20:9-10).

C. From the above passages we may construct the following sequence of prophetic events.

1. The 1260 year period of the witnesses’ testimony against popish antichrist begins in 756 A.D. (but more likely in 800 A.D.) when the pope is seated not only as universal ruler of the Church (which occurred in 606 A.D.), thus, usurping Christ’s place, but is seated as supreme civil ruler of the papal states as well, thus, bringing the church and state under one head.

2. At the end of the 1260 year period (about 2016 A.D. if the 1260 year period begins in 756 A.D. and about 2060 if the 1260 year period begins in 800 A.D.), the faithful witnesses will be slain by antichrist and for a period of 3 1/2 prophetic days (or 3 1/2 yrs.), the witnesses will be subdued (i.e. until ca. 2020 A.D.—this date must be revised if the year 800 A.D. is used to begin the 1260 year period).

3. After the 3 1/2 years the spirit of the martyred witnesses will be resurrected in the lives of new witnesses, whose preaching will be so blessed by Christ that nations will begin to respond to the gospel and they in turn will destroy the popish antichrist.

4. Satan will be bound by Christ for 1,000 prophetic years. This chain of events will signal the inauguration of the millennium in which Israel as a people will be brought to Christ and even more nations will be joined with them in coming into the visible church (within the lifetime of most of us and our children should God grant us another 20 plus years).

5. The effects of the gospel will be so mightily blessed that many nations throughout the world will covenant together to be the Lord’s people, to be taught by Him, and to walk in His ways. Thus, war will come to an end upon the earth during this unprecedented time of gospel peace and prosperity.

C. In light of not only prophecies concerning millennial glory, but prophecies concerning deception of the masses, apostasy from the truth, and persecution for the truth, how ought we presently to live? The most important preparation is spiritual preparation. Take heed lest we be misled or deceived by false signs and wonders.

## **II. The Church’s Glorious Exaltation (“that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills” Micah 4:1).**

A. Unlike previous periods of reformation which were short-lived amongst a few nations, the church during her millennial glory will far surpass her previous attainments and will be ever growing in reformation under a covenanted uniformity in doctrine, worship, and government (more on this next week)—not for a few years, but for a thousand years according to Revelation 20 (figurative for a great period of time, e.g. Deuteronomy 7:9: “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a *thousand* generations”; Psalm 50:10: “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a *thousand* hills.”

1. “Mountains” in prophetic literature signify mighty kingdoms that rule in the nations of the world (e.g. Revelation 17:9; Zechariah 4:7; Daniel 2:34-35). Thus, Christ’s kingdom in the last days will be

exalted above all kingdoms of the world.

2. “The house of the LORD” refers to the temple which God inhabited and where God’s people gathered to worship the Lord. But in the New Testament, the temple is the Church of Jesus Christ which Jesus inhabits (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

B. There is coming a day when the faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ will no longer be persecuted and despised for their faithful testimony to the truth, but God will greatly exalt her above all the kingdoms of the world. Then will she no longer be like a single candle upon a hill seeking to dispel the darkness of false doctrine, corrupt worship, and tyrannical government, but then she will be like a city upon a hill which enlightens all the surrounding hills and valleys with the truth of Jesus Christ. Kings and princes will rule according to the light of God’s Word dispensed to it by the Church of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 49:23; *Larger Catechism* 191).

### **III. The Church’s Glorious Increase (“and people shall flow unto it”, literally, “and all nations shall flow unto it” Micah 4:1).**

A. Isaiah’s prophecy states it this way: “and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isaiah 2:2). This is not the description of two or three nations coming to embrace the true Christian Religion, but a picture of a vast majority of the nations of the world coming to worship the Lord in all purity of doctrine (Genesis 28:14; Psalm 72:11,17; Psalm 86:9; Daniel 2:35; Zechariah 14:17-21; Revelation 15:4). After all, this was Christ’s Great Commission to a small scattered remnant, and He will certainly perform it (Matthew 28:19-20).

B. With this Postmillennial expectation, Francis Turretin, the faithful expounder of biblical Calvinism in Geneva, agrees. In his *Institutes* (3:54), he teaches that in the last days an unprecedented visible splendor and glory will come to the visible church

in the general conversion of the Jews in the end of the world, after the fulness of the Gentiles will come in. At this time the prophets (and after them Paul) promise distinguished glory to the church which will be like a resurrection from the dead (Rom.11:15)....

Our King is mighty to save. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. He will destroy antichrist and establish his church as the chief kingdom above all the nations. This is an earthly goal for which we continually pray and work. We are not in this for the short term, but for the long term, and very possibly within our own lifetime. Such a blessed period of gospel blessing will be the work of God’s Spirit (Zechariah 4).

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