

## **Dr. Gary Yates, Book of the 12, Session 21, Micah's Promise of Restoration**

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the Book of the 12. This is lecture 21, Micah's Promise of Restoration.

As we continue our study of the book of Micah in this session, we are going to look particularly at Micah's message of hope and the promise of restoration that's found in the book of Micah.

Then how we read these eschatological promises that are found in the Old Testament in light of the new. Remember the structure that's found in the book of Micah. There are three sections, chapters one to two, chapters three to six, and chapters seven to eight.

They all begin with the word hear and the call for the people to listen to the message. In the first and the last sections, there is a lengthy message of judgment followed by a short promise of hope that reverses and overturns the judgment. In the middle section of the book, which seems to be kind of the central focus, we have a shorter message of judgment and then a longer message of salvation.

The word remnant is found in all three of those sections of hope. It's the promise that after the judgment has been completed and after God has purged the nations of Israel and Judah of their wickedness, he will restore them and pour out his covenant blessings on them. Micah, in the context of his ministry, engaged in some rather serious conflict with false prophets who were offering delusional and false hopes to the people.

Micah helps them to understand what their real hope is. When Micah preached his message of judgment, the false prophets said, do not preach, do not foam at the mouth about these things. One should not preach of such things because disgrace will not overtake us.

Their offers of hope and their promises that the Assyrian crisis was going to be over soon or later on in Jeremiah's day, the promise of the prophets that the Babylonian crisis would not last long. It was a popular message to the people. Micah said that if there was a prophet who said plenty of beer and wine for these people, that would be just the prophet that these people would want to hear and listen to.

Micah, speaking of these false prophets in chapter 3, verse 11, and the people and how they responded to this message, said that the leaders are unjust, the priests teach for a price, the prophets practice divination for money, and yet they lean on

the Lord and they say, is not the Lord in our midst? No disaster shall come upon us. Micah's message was that disaster was definitely going to come on the people of Judah and they needed to be prepared for that. After the relentless message of judgment that we see in chapters 1 and 2, and then his indictment of the leaders of Judah, specifically in chapters 2 and 3, the middle section of this book is going to focus on hope.

The key passage in all of this is Micah chapter 4, verses 1 to 6. We have a parallel passage that is almost exactly the same in the book of Isaiah. So, we're not sure if this passage originated with Micah, whether it originates with Isaiah, or whether the two prophets are simply using a common tradition. The way that some of this prophecy is expanded on in the book of Micah might suggest that the prophecy originates with Isaiah and that Micah then expands it in some ways that are distinct to his theological purposes and intent.

But the important thing to realize is that as both Micah and Isaiah are preaching in the eighth century in Judah, they both offer this vision of the incredible future that God has for his people. And here's what the passage says in chapter 4. 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 all 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 and 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, for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples and shall decide for strong nations far away.

They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, but they shall sit each 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. For all the people walk each in the name of its God, but we walk in the name of the Lord, our God, forever and forever.

And remember that the eschatological hope, the promise of restoration that the prophets give to us in the Old Testament, has four essential elements. One, God is going to bring his people back from exile. Number two, the city of Jerusalem, is going to be rebuilt and restored.

God will also restore the Davidic dynasty. There will be a future David ultimately pointing forward to Messiah. And then as God blesses Israel, the nations will see what God is doing.

They will be included in God's work of judgment and salvation, and they will enjoy the blessings of this future kingdom as well. This message is certainly in line with that basic prophetic vision. First of all, the passage promises the exaltation of Zion.

And metaphorically, this place that really is a small hill is going to be elevated and become the highest mountain on the face of the earth. It directly overturns what happens in chapter 3, verse 12, when Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins and the mountain of the house of the Lord a wooded height. There is going to be a reversal of the present and the judgment is going to be turned into blessing.

The nations are going to stream to Zion to be a part of this. Isaiah 60, the light and the glory of God's salvation is going to shine upon Jerusalem and the nations are going to come to participate in that and to take part in it. In some prophetic passages in the Old Testament, you have the nations coming to serve Jerusalem, to bring the tribute of the nations to the city and to take a more secondary role.

In other places, they seem to be equal partners, but all together they're going to share in God's salvation. Isaiah chapter 19, in the future kingdom, there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria to Israel. Israel is not even going to be the singular people of God.

Egypt and Assyria, I think, representing all of the nations will be part of God's people. It will be a kingdom that is based on justice and not on violence and warfare. It will be a peace that's brought about through justice, not a false kind of peace that is imposed upon people.

The vision of the reign of Messiah in Isaiah chapter 11, verses one to nine, Isaiah chapter nine, verses one to six, we see something very similar. There is going to be an absence of warfare. In light of what the people in Micah's day were going through, what would happen in the Babylonian crisis that was to follow, this is a promise that meant a great deal to them.

After we, as a worldwide community, have lived through the most violent century in the history of mankind, we've seen two world wars. We've seen the United Nations established with the goal of trying to put an end to war. There has not been a day of peace on earth since that time.

This hope is still very real. But ultimately, they're going to beat their weapons, their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks. They're going to turn the weapons of war into farming implements because they will not engage in war anymore.

Again, consistent with the pattern and the picture of the kingdom of peace that we have in Isaiah 9 and Isaiah 11, the lion and the lamb are going to lie down together.

Not simply talking about the harmony that's going to exist in nature when the curse is overturned, but also the hostility between nations will be taken away and removed as well. Israel, when this happens, will be able to enjoy the peace, the blessing, the security, and the prosperity in the land.

There's this image in chapter 4, verse 4, which says, they will sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one will make them afraid. They will all be able to enjoy the inheritance of the land that God has given to them. They will never have to fear enemy attack.

When God does his future work of salvation in the hearts of the people of Israel, he will transform their hearts. Jeremiah 32, verses 38 to 40, says they will never again be invaded or attacked because they will fully obey the Lord, and there will never again be a need for God to judge his people. So, they're looking for a time when Israel would never again have to experience the invasion they experienced during the Assyrian crisis or like what would happen during the Babylonian exile.

This expression that every man would sit under his vine and under his fig tree is also found for us in 1 Kings chapter 4 verse 25. In the idealistic portrayal of the kingdom of Solomon, Solomon brought peace and security and stability to the land. So, part of what's being envisioned here is a return to the glory days of the Davidic Solomonic Empire.

Yet this kingdom is going to be something far greater than even that. So, that's the vision of the future that Isaiah, Micah, and all of the prophets basically are giving us the same idea in the same picture. Now, as we work our way through this central section of the book of Micah, the basic picture here is clear.

But one of the things that is somewhat confusing and somewhat difficult, and I think this is part of the frustration of reading the Old Testament prophets, is that when we begin to try to examine the chronology of Micah's vision of the future and how do the things that are happening in the near future, in his lifetime, and in the generation to follow, how does that chronologically fit together with the time of Israel's restoration? When is all of this going to happen? Those are some of the questions that the prophets do not answer for us. We would like to have a more detailed road map. The prophets are giving us more of what we would say is a soft lens vision of the future where they are promising the restoration, but how that fits time-wise with the things that are going on in Micah's day or in the near future, that's not always clear.

In fact, as we work through some of the chronology of Micah's chapters four and five, it becomes even more confusing. We've had this vision of what's going to happen in the latter days in chapters four, verses one to eight, but notice what it's going to say in chapters four, verses nine and ten. Micah says, now, why do you cry

aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished? The pain that 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 the open country. You shall go to Babylon. And there you shall be rescued.

And there, the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. Micah ministered during the time of the Assyrian crisis, the Babylonian crisis, and the exile was going to come after that. But now Micah is not just prophesying about what's happening in his day.

He specifically mentions that the people will go to Babylon. So, he is looking here and prophesying here about the events that are going to occur in 586 BC. The Babylonian exile and then the rescue and the return of the people from that.

However, in chapter four, verses 11 to 13, he goes back to the things that are happening in his day and how God is going to deliver the city of Jerusalem from the Assyrians—chapter four, verses 11 to 13. Now many nations are assembled against you saying, let her be defiled and let her eyes gaze upon Zion.

And remember how the Assyrian army under Sennacherib had surrounded the city, and Sennacherib was demanding its absolute surrender from Hezekiah. But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord. They do not understand the plan that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor.

Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hooves bronze. So now we're talking about the destruction of the enemies that are surrounding Jerusalem. This seems to be referring in some sense to the victory over Sennacherib and how the angel of the Lord would go out in the middle of the night and destroy those enemies.

So, in chapters four, verses nine and 10, we're talking about the Babylonian crisis. In chapters four, verses 11 to 13, we're back to Micah's time and the Assyrian crisis. Then, in chapters five, verses one and two, we're looking forward to the first century BC and the first coming of the Messiah.

And verse two says, but you O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth from me one who is to be a ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from of ancient days. Very important messianic passage. And what this passage is talking about when it talks about his coming forth from old and from ancient days; this is not talking about the pre-existence of Jesus the way that we think about it as Christians.

And we know that Jesus as a man ultimately was the second person of God and he was the pre-existent son of God. But what this is talking about here is more the fact that Messiah is going to revive the ancient Davidic dynasty and there's going to be a fresh start for the Davidic dynasty. So now we're moving forward to the hope of the coming of Jesus in the first century.

And so this is one of the things that when we start looking at this, you understand the frustration sometimes of reading the prophets and trying to understand their vision of the future. Chapter 5, verses 4 and 5, now we're looking at the second coming of Messiah. He shall stand and shall shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall dwell securely.

For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth and he shall be their peace. So, this ruler that's going to come from the line of David is ultimately going to rule and give the people of Israel peace. And so, we've moved from chapter 5, verse 2, the first coming of Jesus, chapter 5, verses 4 and 5, the second coming of Jesus.

And there's going to be peace and security for the people of Israel under the reign of their Messiah. Then he seems to go back in chapter 5, verse 5, back to the Assyrian crisis. It says, when the Assyrian comes into our land and treads our palaces, then we will raise up against them seven shepherds and eight princes of men and shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword and the land of Nimrod at its entrances.

And he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads in our borders. So, when Messiah sets up his kingdom and establishes this kingdom of peace, he's going to defeat the Assyrians, who happen to be the enemies that are invading Judah and in the land right now. So, what do we do with the chronology of all of this and how do we understand this? Again, it's a reminder to us that the prophets are not trying to give us a detailed chronology.

In fact, as God reveals and unfolds the future for them, they do not necessarily understand that themselves. But what happens is that they tend to join together events that are in the near future, things that are happening maybe even in their own lifetime, with the things that are going to happen in the ultimate eschatological restoration. The point of this is not that God doesn't understand what's going to happen in the future, but it has to do with the way that God reveals that future to us.

What God is revealing to his prophets is that there are patterns of judgment and salvation that will take place in the near future. Those things mirror for us and reflect for us what is ultimately going to happen in the final restoration when God brings his kingdom to earth. So, the Lord is going to do a work of judgment and salvation in the near future.

The Lord was going to use the Assyrians to judge, and he did that to judge both Israel and Judah. Ultimately, he delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians in 701 BC. That pattern would repeat itself in the next century.

God would send the Babylonians to judge Jerusalem, and ultimately, they would take the people away into exile. But God promised in both of these crises that he would ultimately deliver his people, and he did that. He brought the people of Israel out of their exile in Babylon.

Cyrus, the Persian king, conquered the Babylonians and issued the decree that allowed the Jews to go back to their homeland. The importance of this is that those deliverances and those judgments that happen in the near future are a pattern of the ultimate deliverance that will come through the Messiah. So, the pattern of judgment and salvation and then deliverance repeats itself with the first coming of Jesus.

So, there are now and not yet aspects of the kingdom restoration that God is bringing to the people of Israel. Jesus comes to bring a greater deliverance. He comes to deliver the people from their exile to sin.

The ultimate enemy that Jesus is going to engage is not Babylon or Rome. The ultimate enemy that Jesus is going to engage is Satan, and the sins of his people have to be destroyed if they can be fully restored. So, the pattern carries itself forward.

But there is also a rejection of Messiah at that time. So the promises that are given, for example, in chapters 5, verses 4 to 9, when the Messiah is going to defeat the Assyrians and the powers and the kings that are in the land, and there's going to be this kingdom of peace, that ultimately is not going to happen until the second coming. So, this pattern of judgment and salvation is going to continue and to carry forward until the final restoration.

What the work of God in the Assyrian and the Babylonian crisis, how God ultimately delivers his people, the hope that this gives us is the fact that God saves his people out of those crises, demonstrates that he will ultimately fulfill his promises and provide the full restoration that's envisioned in passages like Micah chapter 4 verses 1 to 6. So, this pattern of near and far that's what the prophetic message is about. God ultimately wins, and judgment and salvation will continue until God does his work of ultimate salvation. Again, we can't simply take our newspaper and find detailed references to contemporary events here.

What we see is more a pattern of how God works. Bruce Waltke explains this feature of the prophetic message very effectively. He says this: the prophets represent their heralded events as occurring on the same historical horizon.

In other words, the prophet can talk about deliverance from Babylon and Assyria on the same horizon as the ultimate deliverance in the last days. The enemy that will be defeated and destroyed in the last days can be portrayed as the Assyrians because the victory that God wins in the near future guarantees his ultimate victory in the future. Then Waltke concludes this by saying, the prophets represent their heralded events as occurring on the same historical horizon, but the occurrences might in fact prove to be separated by ages.

So, there is a near deliverance that's going to happen in 701 BC. That took place in Micah's day. There's going to be a deliverance a little bit further down the road in 538 when God brings the people back from their exile in Babylon.

But all of that is ultimately in the distant eschatological future, pointing to the final and the ultimate restoration of God's people and the coming of his kingdom. When all of the promises are laid out for us in chapter 4, verses 1 to 6, or chapter 5, verses 4 to 9, when those things are going to be realized? I often try to explain this to my students.

It's difficult for them to understand, but I live here in Virginia where people were surrounded by mountains. Prophetic vision and what they see about the future often is what happens when people drive out on the Blue Ridge Parkway and look at the mountains. They can see one mountain immediately in front of them.

Then there are mountains behind that that look like they're directly behind them. If they drive to another vantage point, however, they realize that those two mountains might be separated by a great distance. The prophets look at the mountains in front and they see these two mountains that are back to back to each other.

One of them represents the work that God is doing in the near future. The second mountain represents the events that God is going to do in the distant future. From their vantage point it looks as if those mountains are back to back to each other.

But if you drive behind the first mountain and your depth and your perception change because of your vantage point, you then realize that those two mountains might, in fact, be separated by a long distance. Now that we see the message of the prophets in light of the first coming of Jesus in light of the cross and what happened there, and in light of the time gap between the promise of Israel returning from exile and the ultimate kingdom of God, we understand that there is a distance between these events. One of the struggles, one of the difficulties in reading the prophets is that sometimes it appears as if an Isaiah or a Micah is promising to the people God is going to bring you back from Babylon and then this incredible kingdom of peace and blessing and justice and absence of warfare is going to come about.



We know from history that it didn't happen that way. But as the Jews read these prophecies and think about the Jews in Jesus' day, they did not conclude that the prophets were wrong. Well, I guess Isaiah and Micah just spoke too idealistically.

It didn't really happen that way. Let's try to move forward. They believed in the first century that those promises were still in effect.

Jesus announced in the synagogue in his hometown that the promise of Isaiah 61 of preaching good news to the poor and releasing the captives, that message was still in effect. Jesus says I am announcing to you that that fulfillment and the time of what Isaiah is promising, I'm the one that's here to bring that about. So, they did not conclude that the prophets were wrong in the way that they promised restoration and then the kingdom coming immediately.

They help us to understand the time gap that is between those two things. So, what I would like to do in light of that is now to talk about how we understand these eschatological promises in the book of Micah. How do we understand what God is promising for Israel in these last-day promises? In light of our added perspective, looking at this from the perspective of the New Testament, looking at this from the perspective of the additional revelation that God has given to us in the New Testament, there are a couple of issues that I'd like us to think about. Micah talks about in Micah 4:1, it shall come to pass in the latter days.

This type of expression is often used in these prophetic visions of the future. It will say things like, after these things, or after these days, or after many days, or days are coming. So this is an expression that is looking forward to the restoration of Israel.

As salvation history unfolds and we are able to trace God's dealings with Israel, we see that these last days, as we've just talked about, these last days take place in stages. There is a patterned fulfillment to the realization of the last day promises. I think the first stage of this pattern is in the return from exile.

God keeps his promise. God defeats the Assyrians. God defeats the Babylonians.

He brings his people back home. The second stage of the last days has to do with the first coming of Jesus. With this, the last days promised by the prophets have arrived.

As Amos, Joel, Micah, and Isaiah are talking about things that are going to happen in the last days, those things begin to happen with the first coming of Jesus, not just with his second. So, the third stage is ultimately going to be the consummation or the culmination of the last days and the full realization and the complete fulfillment of the promises that are there. We've talked about this in other sessions, but the last days are not just the time around the second coming.

It's not just the time of Jacob's trouble in the tribulation period. The time clock is punched with the beginning of the last days, and the clock is ticking until the continuation, culmination, and consummation of those last days at the second coming. So, we have these kinds of statements found in the New Testament.

1 John 2, verse 18, "...my children, it is the last hour." So, John wants those Christians living in the first century to understand they are living in the eschatological last days. Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, "...in past times God has spoken to us in many ways and through the prophets, but in these last days, as the culmination of his revelation, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed the heir of all things." So, in the last days, the revelation that comes through Christ marks the beginning of that great eschatological kingdom period that was promised by the prophets. In 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul explains to Timothy why he is experiencing difficulty and why he would experience difficulty throughout his ministry.

He says, "...because we know that in the last days, men will be lovers of self, they will not listen to God, they will hate God, they will act in evil and wicked ways." Paul is not talking about something that is going to start happening near the time of the second coming of Jesus. Paul is explaining something that is happening to Timothy in his day. Here is the reason why ministry is such a struggle and why it is so difficult.

You are ministering in the last days. So, again, Paul is not talking to Timothy about things that are going to happen in the future. That is what is going on in Timothy's ministry now.

So, the New Testament clarifies for us that when Micah is talking about in the last days, those last days have already begun. Now, going along with that, we see that a number of the promises in the prophets that are associated with the last days, those promises have already begun to be experienced as well. I want to mention a few of these that I think have helped me to understand this and helped me to understand the now and not yet aspects of the last days, the now and not yet aspects of God's kingdom.

The fact that the prophets are not just talking about things that are associated with the second coming. They are not just talking about things that are going to be experienced by the people of Israel at that time. They are talking about blessings that we enjoy in light of what Christ has done for us at the first coming.

First of all, Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31 to 34, says that in the last days, God is going to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah. He is going to erase the sins of the past and their failures, and he is going to forgive them. He is also going to write the law on their hearts so that they will have the ability, the desire, and the capacity to obey him.

Well, in Hebrews chapters 8 and 10, when a writer of Hebrews is trying to encourage the Jewish Christians there not to go back on their commitment to Jesus, he is going to quote Jeremiah chapter 31 in both Hebrews 8 and Hebrews 10. In fact, the longest quotation of any Old Testament passage in the New Testament is found there as he quotes the new covenant promise. And what he says is that you are already living under the new covenant.

That is what you have in Christ. Why would you want to renounce that and go back to the old covenant? We are living under the benefits and the blessings of the new covenant. Jesus says on the night before his crucifixion as he institutes the Lord's Supper, take this cup.

This cup represents the blood that I am about to shed for you that institutes the new covenant, the blood of the new covenant. The death of Jesus is what brings this new covenant into effect. So, we as believers now are enjoying the benefits and the blessings of the new covenant that were promised to Israel and to Judah in Jeremiah 31.

God had said to Abraham, all nations on earth are going to be blessed through you in Jesus. That becomes a reality. And so, we, as the church, as the new covenant people of God, enjoy those benefits and blessings already.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 he is a minister of the new covenant. And he talks about the Corinthians being an epistle written on his heart. He's definitely and clearly alluding there to Jeremiah 31 and the reality of us living under the new covenant.

The New Testament does not say that we live under a second new covenant. It does not say that we live under something that is like the new covenant. We are seeing, we are experiencing, we are enjoying, and this is an incredible blessing that God has given to us in Christ, the blessings of the new covenant.

In Joel chapter 2 verse 28 to 32, Joel says that in the last days God will pour out his spirit on all flesh and they will prophesy and they will see dreams and they'll see visions and all these things that are going to happen. God in a great way is going to restore his people by giving them his spirit. The message of the prophets is that the eschatological age is going to be an age of the spirit.

That's where the enablement and the empowerment of God's people are going to come from. When the spirit of God is poured out on the disciples in Acts chapter 2, and they speak in tongues, and they give witness to Christ, and the people around them are saying, what in the world is going on here? Are these people drunk? What happened? Peter says it's too early in the morning for that. What you need to

understand is that this is the fulfillment of what Joel prophesied about the last days and the pouring out of the spirit.

You are seeing evidence here that God is fulfilling his promise in Joel chapter 2 verses 28 to 32. Again, Peter does not say this is like what Joel prophesied or this is similar to this. He cites that this is the fulfillment of what Joel had prophesied was going to happen in the last days.

That has already begun to take place. There is an already, not yet, aspect to the last days' promises. Isaiah 61 is a passage that we just talked about a couple of minutes ago.

The prophet says, the spirit of the Lord is upon me and he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor and release to the captives. I think Isaiah talking about himself and the message that he had about the people being returned from exile and the deliverance that God would provide there. But also looking forward to a future herald who would announce the ultimate deliverance of God's people.

When Jesus stands up to read the scroll of Isaiah in Luke chapter 4, verse 16, the passage that he reads from is Isaiah 61. Jesus says this today these words are being fulfilled in your midst. So, in other words, Isaiah looked forward to this time when there would be a herald that would announce God's ultimate deliverance.

Jesus says I am the herald that Isaiah promised. The last-day promises are in effect. In the Gospel of Luke, this passage is put at the front in the beginning of Jesus' public ministry to serve as sort of a programmatic statement as to what Jesus' entire ministry is about.

He's fulfilling the role, this last-day message that was promised in Isaiah 61. The last day of hope in Isaiah is in Isaiah 52:7. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who proclaim, our God reigns. They look forward to the time when God would bring his people back from exile and that God would rule and reign over his people in a way that was even greater than the way that he reigned in the present.

God would come back to Jerusalem with his people as he established them in the land and God would be their king and would rule over them. When John and Jesus come, and they say, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, they are talking about the last day's eschatological kingdom that was promised in Isaiah 52. So, in light of that, what about our last day's passage here in Micah chapter four? We work through this passage in class, or when I'm teaching through Isaiah chapter two, I'll often ask the students, is this a passage that has been fulfilled, or is this a passage that is still going to be fulfilled? As they read about this and we talk about the mountain of the house of the Lord being established as the highest of the mountains lifted above the hills, the people flowing to it to worship the Lord, beating their

swords into plowshares, every man sitting under his vine, their answer typically is, well, this hasn't been fulfilled yet.

Obviously when we're talking about the absence of warfare and swords into plowshares and all these kinds of things, obviously we're not experiencing it. We're not living in a world that is described here. But what I would want us to see and understand in light of the pattern that we've just been talking about and in light of the fact that the last day's prophecies and last day's promises are already being realized and fulfilled, even this passage in Micah chapter four or Isaiah chapter two, as we look at it there, we are talking about now and not yet realities.

The ultimate fulfillment, the consummation of this promise, the time when there will be no warfare, the time when there's perfect justice in the world. Obviously, that hasn't arrived yet. But in light of the fact that the kingdom has begun and has been inaugurated and put into effect with the first coming of Jesus, these promises in Isaiah two and in Micah chapter four, we're already living. It's an exciting thing to think about.

We're already living the beginning of what this passage is talking about. When you understand this, it changes the way that you teach and preach the prophets. I think often we come to the place in a lectionary, or we're going through a book, and we've got to preach through one of these prophecies.

The way that we typically do this is that we look at this promise about the latter days and say, wow, this is awesome. Isn't it going to be great when the world is finally the way it should be? That's part of what these passages are designed to do for us. We should put that out in front of people.

First John says that anyone who has this hope in him purifies himself. One of the things that I think has happened to us as a church today as Christians today is that we don't teach eschatology enough. We don't preach the second coming of Christ often enough and people have become too comfortable with this world as their home.

Things are so good and prosperous for us here that we often forget about the hope that we have for the future. But I think what we also need to do as we preach these prophecies is that we need to help people understand this is what the kingdom of God is like. We have been transferred, and Paul says in Colossians chapter 1, we have been transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

As a result of that, we get to live right now with the blessings and realities that are being promised here. We get to experience, at least in part, even as we live in a fallen, corrupt, sinful, wicked, violent world, we get to experience in part the blessing of what's going on here. Now, you might say, beyond the pattern that you've been talking about, is there clear evidence anywhere in the New Testament that would

clearly say that Isaiah chapter 2, the mountain is going to be lifted up, the nations are going to stream to Zion, Micah chapter 4, they're going to sit under their vines and enjoy God's blessing.

Is there any clear evidence that the New Testament sees any type of partial fulfillment of this passage? I want to mention just two things in the New Testament. In Acts chapter 2, again going back to the day of Pentecost and back to the promise of Joel chapter 2, the pouring out of the Spirit, Peter says this: Acts chapter 2, these people are not drunk, as you suppose, it's only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel, and in the last days, it shall be.

And then Peter goes on, and quotes the passage from Joel chapter 2, verses 28 to 32. But what we might miss here is that Peter appears to be referencing another passage as well. The passage that he is referencing here is also Isaiah chapter 2, verses 1 to 4, the parallel text to the passage that we have here in Micah chapter 4. Greg Beale says that in the citation, and in the last days it shall be, what the Greek reads is *estai en tais esxathais hamerais*, and it will be in these last days.

That particular exact expression in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, is only found in Isaiah chapter 2, verse 2. So, although Joel chapter 2 is the key text that's referenced and quoted here, Peter seems to include within this, or Luke includes within this, as he gives us Peter's quotation of the Old Testament, an indirect allusion back to Isaiah chapter 2 as well. So, this great passage in Isaiah 2 about the nations streaming to Zion, about the presence of God being enjoyed, about justice and peace, that passage itself is also the blessings that are partially being experienced and realized. So, I think in the prophetic vision of the New Testament, what the apostles would say is that Isaiah chapter 2 envisions the nations coming to Zion and worshipping the Lord.

Our mission as a church, as we go out from Jerusalem and make disciples in Judea, Samaria, and the nations of the earth, we are fulfilling what that passage was talking about. But now, instead of the nations streaming into Zion, the Lord is sending his messengers and his apostles and his missionaries out from Zion, and they're bringing about the reality of what Isaiah chapter 2 and Micah chapter 4 were talking about. The purpose of the mountain of the Lord's house being exalted and lifted up, the purpose of the eschatological temple, what would be central in Jerusalem in this future time, is that the people would learn the law of God and they would experience the presence of God.

That was the role and the message of the apostles as they go out. They're making God's presence real in the world. Now we are enjoying as believers the presence of God in an even more direct way than the people in the Old Testament enjoyed as they made pilgrimage to Jerusalem and worshiped the Lord and met with the Lord at the temple in Zion.

Isaiah 2 is not just about peace and prosperity. Isaiah 2 and Micah chapter 4 are ultimately about the blessings of God's presence. That's what the pilgrims focused on the most as they came to Jerusalem.

The temple provides us with an opportunity to experience God and to enjoy him. The greatest covenant blessing that God brought to the people of Israel was the enjoyment and the blessing of his presence. Well, in Hebrews chapter 12, which, again, the book of Hebrews is a book trying to help Jewish believers understand the greatness of the blessings that they had in Christ so that they would not renounce or turn back their confession in him.

Hebrews chapter 12 verse 22 says this, but you have come already. Okay, this is not talking about what happens when you die and go to heaven. You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gatherings.

As believers in Christ, you, in a sense, have already made the ultimate pilgrimage because now you are allowed access to the presence of God in the heavenly Jerusalem. The spiritual reality of what Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 were talking about is that we live that, and we experience that as believers. I enjoy the blessings of the heavenly Jerusalem, not just when I die but as I live and as I relate to God and experience him in my life.

And he says, in all of this, as you've come to the heavenly Jerusalem, you have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. It was the blood of Christ. It was the death of Christ, the cross of Christ.

It has opened the way to the heavenly Jerusalem. So, in a sense, the promise of Isaiah 2 and of Micah 4 is fulfilled in an even greater way than we can imagine just from reading those prophecies. Now, the now aspect of this, the spiritual fulfillment of this, doesn't preclude the possibility that ultimately there is going to be a final and complete and a literal fulfillment of this.

But as we read the eschatological promises of the Old Testament, it's important to understand that spiritually, we are already beginning to enjoy. We have already received these blessings through what Christ has done for us. And I think when we understand that, it enhances our understanding of the spiritual riches that we have in Christ.

We have everything that God would want us to have to live the kind of life that God wants us to live. He's given us every divine enablement to do that. We have every

spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, because we are enjoying now the eschatological blessings that are promised by the prophets.

So, we need to remind people of those present realities as we preach the prophets, as well as point them toward the future hope and the ultimate reality of what the world will be like when there is a new heaven, a new earth, and the eschatological kingdom finally arrives. It also means that as we preach these passages, the promises of the last days and what God will do in his kingdom become our agenda today. If the agenda of the kingdom and if the goal of the kingdom is ultimately that the nations will come and worship the Lord, our responsibility is to call them to worship the Lord.

If the ultimate responsibility is that the nations will come to learn the law of God, and if that's what the kingdom is about, then it's our responsibility to proclaim that word. If the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom will bring peace and justice between the nations, our job as Christians is not just to wait for this world to go to hell so that the next one can come. Our job is to implement peace and justice in the world that we live in now.

The kingdom agenda of these passages becomes the agenda of the church because we are the instrument that brings God's kingdom or that calls people to that kingdom in the present. All right. Now, there's one last of these passages in the Minor Prophets that I wanted to talk about briefly because it's a difficult verse to understand in terms of how it's used in the New Testament.

That's the passage that's found for us in Amos chapter 9, verses 11 to 15. In Amos chapter 9, verses 11 to 15, it's another one of these eschatological passages in the Prophets. It looks like when we read it, wow, this is the millennial kingdom and exclusively that because it talks about God's going to restore the fallen booth of David.

Israel is going to enjoy this incredible prosperity and blessing where the mountains drip with wine. I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel. But when we go to the New Testament, we understand that the apostles understand that the promises for the last days that are given to us in Amos chapter 9 are being fulfilled in the early days of the church.

God is going to restore the fallen booth of David so that they might possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name. So, the Davidic king is going to rule over the nations and he's going to conquer them and subdue them. At the Jerusalem council, when James talks about this issue, what are we going to do with Gentiles that are coming into the church? Do we require them to become Jews? Do we require them to be circumcised to keep the Sabbath, to keep the food laws? The decision of the Jerusalem Council was that those things were not to be imposed upon the Jews.



James argues for that on the basis of Amos chapter 9. He believes that the Gentiles that are coming to faith through the missionary endeavors of the early church are the fulfillment of what God has promised for Israel and what God has promised for the house of David in Amos chapter 9. So, in the midst of this council, in Acts chapter 15 verse 16, James says this, and with this, the words of the prophets agree just as it is written: after this I will return and I will rebuild the house, rebuild the tent of David that has fallen. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it. That the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.

So, James's argument that the things that were obligated of Jews to do under the Old Testament law, these things are not to be put on the Gentiles as an obligation. He quotes this passage from Amos chapter 9. Now, one of the problems as we read this, however, is that what we read in the Hebrew text in Amos chapter 9 says this: I will repair the fallen booth of David that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name. This passage presents the king, the house of David will militarily subject the nations.

The old enemy of Israel, Edom, is going to become part of the Davidic kingdom again. This king is going to rule over all the nations who are called by my name as he subdues them. In James's quotation of this, where he quotes the Septuagint, which is reading a different Hebrew text than what we have in Amos chapter 9, says this, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord and all the Gentiles who are called by my name.

So, what do we do with these two different readings? Well, ultimately, what we have reflected here are two Hebrew texts that are very similar to each other. The reason that Amos' text says that they may possess the remnant of Edom is that he takes the word Edom there, which is again, Israel's enemy, the descendants of Esau, and he reads Edom there. However, the Hebrew text that is the foundation of what James is reading says, the remnant of mankind.

The consonants of those two words, Edom and mankind, are exactly the same. The only thing that is different is simply the vowels that are there. Remember, the vowels were not originally part of the text.

So, we simply have two different readings of the text. Amos says, David, the house of David is going to possess the remnant of Edom. James says, the remnant of Adam are going to seek the Lord.

So that's one of the differences. The other difference is the slight difference that's there because of the two different verbs. Amos, the text in Amos says that the house of David is going to possess the remnant of Edom, Yadash.

The text that James is reading says the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord. And the word for seeking there is the word Dadash. The first letter is the only thing that is different.

And so, because of these slight differences in how the Hebrew text is read, Edom, Adam, mankind, Yadash shall possess or inherit versus Dadash shall seek. That's why we end up with these two different readings. James is reading the Septuagint here because that is the Old Testament of the early church.

It also makes more clearly the point that he's trying to make here. The idea is that the Gentiles are going to be included in the future kingdom. Amos says the same thing.

The Gentiles are going to be included in the future kingdom as David possesses them and conquers them. So, the idea that James is trying to make here about the inclusion of the nations is found in the Old Testament text, but it is simply expressed in a more positive way in the alternate reading that we have in the Septuagint that becomes the basis of his promise here. Now, one final thing about James's statement here.

How does James infer from this passage in Amos chapter nine that the requirements of the Old Testament Torah were placed upon the Jews? How does he infer that these should not be things that are placed upon the Gentiles? Well, the general feeling is that when it speaks in this passage of the Gentiles being called by the name of God, it helps us to understand the honored position and the fact that the Gentiles will share with the Jewish people in the future the identity of becoming the people of God. On the basis of that special relationship, Gentiles will also be called the people of God. James is saying, look back to the Old Testament.

The Old Testament talked about this. It talked about their role and their inclusion. The fact that they are called by my name and the fact that God has promised that he would bless them and include them, the inference that we take away from that is that Gentiles should not be required to become Jews.

So, this passage simply reflects the pattern that we have throughout the New Testament as they read the promises of the prophets. The prophets promise a glorious eschatological kingdom. Micah, it's the centerpiece of his message.

The nations are going to stream to Zion. The future Messiah will restore the Davidic dynasty. Those promises are the last days promises that are given to us in the prophets.

The New Testament message is those promises and the realization and the fulfillment of those promises are now and not yet. We enjoy the initial fulfillment of those promises in Christ. We look forward to their ultimate fulfillment at his second coming and in the eschatological kingdom.

Micah, in his message, reminds us of what we already have in Christ and then, ultimately, what we have to look forward to when Christ rules and reigns over new heavens and a new earth.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the Book of the 12. This is lecture 21, Micah's Promise of Restoration.