

“God’s Strategy for World Domination”

Micah 5

Some of you may recall the cartoon from the 1990’s Pinky and the Brain. Pinky and Brain were lab mice by day but world schemers by night. Well, Brain was. Pinky, he wasn’t very helpful to Brain in the intelligence department. Every episode began with Pinky asking Brain, what are we going to do today, Brain? ‘Try to take over the world!’ was Brain’s pat answer.

So in each episode Brain concocted some extravagant, way too complicated scheme for world domination that always failed either because of Pinky’s dim witted antics or Brain’s arrogance and overconfidence. Needless to say, they never succeeded.

While it’s a silly cartoon it is a great illustration for all would-be schemers in earth’s entire history who all failed to dominate the world. These schemes of course have involved the death and destruction of many usually at the expense of gaining political, military and financial control in the world. Thankfully God has His own plan for world domination, yet strangely enough, He who has the power to do it by Himself at any moment in time has patiently been waiting a long time to bring it about. This of course involves the return of His Son Jesus Christ, who, as we studied last week in Micah 4, will one day rule with justice and righteousness from Jerusalem on David’s throne as prophesied numerous times in the Bible.

Why has God delayed Jesus’ return? Because 2 Pet. 3:9 states that God is not slow in keeping His promises but is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. While everyone will not repent, we know the heart of God. God’s ways and plans are nothing like the ungodly attempts to control the world. We read about this in Micah 5 as Micah continues to explain how God will bring about His plan for Jesus to come and rule with Israel as the ruling nation.

At the end of Ch.3 God prophesied through Micah that the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed one day. However, Ch.4 promises that ‘In the last days’ Jerusalem will be rebuilt and everyone will flock to the city to learn God’s Word and listen to his Son, the Messiah. Micah elaborated on a number of other wonderful things that future day, which we understand as the Millennium, but he turned back to the present time and reassured them that even though they are threatened by a foreign power right now (Assyria), they have a good King (Hezekiah) who will cry out to the Lord for deliverance. Then Micah reminds Israel that in the future they will overrule their enemies. Ch. 5 begins with a reminder of the difficulties they will face before the Messiah returns. Remarkably, this is how God began His plan for His Son to take control of the world:

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.

² *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, 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 of old, from ancient days.*

³ *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.*

⁴ *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.*

⁵ *And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men;*

⁶ *they 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 within our border.*

God's plan to govern the world through His Son seems counter-productive. Because

God Allows Present Humiliation Before Future Triumph **(5:1-6)**

While Micah is encouraging Israel about their future glory, he keeps coming back to the present reality of the threat from Assyria. Yes, they have a godly king Hezekiah, and yes he says get your troops ready because Assyria will try and lay a siege against you. The details of this account are in Isaiah 36-37. Assyria had successfully defeated the strongholds of Judah – the names of which Micah already listed in Ch. 1 – and as they approached Jerusalem, Sennacherib sent his field commander with an 'offer' of surrender to Hezekiah. In his challenge to Hezekiah he humiliates him before the people. He even speaks in Hebrew so all the people can hear his words and be afraid. The Assyrians were a ruthless people.

God has a history of allowing His people to be humbled before He gives them victory. 400 years of slavery in Egypt before the exodus. Joseph was sold as a slave to Egypt, falsely accused of adultery, thrown in prison where he was forgotten for years before being rescued and lifted up. Joshua would march around the walls of Jericho for 6 days without saying a word, probably listening to the insults of the people on the walls before the walls came down. And now Hezekiah will be "struck on the cheek" which is a humiliating public act before God will miraculously rescue Judah from the Assyrians. But remember,

A Current defeat does not mean a future defeat (vv.1)

Watch any film or read any good book and the heroes always experience a temporary setback. These always create a false sense of security for the villain in the story. But we know the heroes will ultimately win. Frodo will toss the ring into the fires of Mordor. Luke Skywalker will defeat Darth Vader. The Avengers will be victorious over Thanos.

And in God's plan to rule the world, Jesus will be humiliated on the cross. He endured the insults, beatings, spitting, nails without attacking back because He knows this isn't the end. That God allows temporary setbacks and losses – even humiliation – before He finally completes His plan. All too often, we are devastated by setbacks like laws being passed that are immoral, politicians who get away with injustice, criminals not getting what they deserve, etc. While we should do everything we can to promote godliness and moral principles that protect everyone's rights, let's not forget who allows these things to happen because He has a purpose we can't see and a plan that we know all about. Read Revelation – we win!

So the son of David king in Micah's day will be temporarily humiliated and so will the future son of David be humiliated. Even before Jesus dies on the cross His entrance into this world is humbling. But again, what does God enjoy doing?

God exalts the lowly and insignificant to significance (vv.2a)

Bethlehem Ephrathah is a small town 6 miles south of

Jerusalem. It was small among the clans. A clan was a military term meaning a garrison of 1000. Bethlehem wasn't able to raise a small military to defend itself. Yet from her would come the Messiah, who will *"come forth for Me"*, for God, *"to be ruler of Israel"*. By then, most of the sons of David kings had been born in Jerusalem because that's where the kings lived. God was essentially saying, 'how's that be working for the last 200 years? Not very good. So let's start all over again where God began the kingship with Israel, in David's hometown. Let's get a new David but He's more than another man.

"whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."

He's already been around? How can that be? He's God in the flesh. He's divine. He will humble Himself by becoming one of us, having an insignificant beginning but that protected Him from the wicked Herod.

"... have the same attitude as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself ...

Jesus never used His divinity to sway things His way or to whine to God that people weren't treating Him properly or that He didn't have a place to live or any blessings that the average human experiences. All part of God's plan who, as Paul points out in 1 Cor. 1:27

²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

This is how God works. He allows Himself to be humiliated and look weak to confound the wise so He can

To fulfil God's purposes (vv.2b-6)

Now Micah says in v.3 that God will give "them up", speaking of Micah's current audience *"until she who is in labour has given birth"*. So that's a reference to the Messiah's entrance into the world from Bethlehem around 6 BC. So Israel will be exiled and God will remove the kingship from Israel all that time and Israel even they returned from exile, will serve under a foreign power. Assyria, then Babylon, then Persia, then, Greece, then Rome. And then Micah, like all the prophets who had almost no concept of a gap of time between Jesus' first coming and a future return speaks about Jesus' rule

"then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

⁴ 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.

⁵ And he shall be their peace."

So we are still waiting – and Israel has been waiting since 605 BC, for the Messiah to come and restore the Davidic kingship and rule from Jerusalem. This delay is all part of God's plan to continue to witness to the world and give them time to repent and come to know Him before Jesus

returns. He is going to change the world, and He's been doing it little by little since Jesus left this earth and ascended to His Father and sits at His right hand until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. So how is God doing that right now?

God is Using Chosen 'Leftovers' to Change the World **(5:7-15)**

Vv.5-6 seem to indicate God is going to use multiple shepherds to defeat Assyria, which not only contradicts the context of the passage about the Messiah's victory nor does it indicate what actually happened. Most commentators note the use of the personal pronouns "our" and "we" meaning Israel is doing the talking. Most suggest this is what the people thought was going to happen, but instead God did a miracle and defeated the Assyrians without the help of any soldier. There was no battle for Jerusalem if you read Is. 37. God miraculously sent a plague that killed 185,000 soldiers in one night. In fear Sennacherib went back to Nineveh.

Even we as God's people make plans and imagine scenarios using our own resources on how we can solve problems in our life and the world's. Yet we discover that's not how God often works. V. 7 and v.8 emphasize the size of God's army that will be used; a remnant. The word remnant means what's left behind but it also means unique, special, chosen. So God says the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations in the midst of the peoples like a strong lion. Just like the small army that accompanied Gideon, God chooses a small remnant of His people to accomplish His work. What kind of people?

People who do God's will in God's strength (vv.7-9)

The remnant will be like dew or showers on the grass that wait for no man. We have no control over dew or showers. God provides; period. With this small remnant God will bring about His plan to glorify Himself in the world and establish Jesus' rule on earth. He compares this small contingent as a young lion whom no one can rescue from his attack.

Think of all the promises God makes to us.

'No one can snatch us out of the father's hand' [John 10:28-29]
'There is no condemnation for us in Christ' [Rom. 8:1]
'Nothing can separate us from the love of God' [Rom. 8:35]
'We are more than conquerors' [Rom. 8:37]
'Death has no sting over us' [1 Cor. 15:55]
'The gates of hell shall not prevail over Jesus' church' [Matt. 16:18]

Whether its for Israel or for the church, God has promised to empower us by His Spirit to be victorious one day over all our enemies, but also gives us the spiritual resources to be victorious and withstand the enemy's attacks now. Even to endure minor setbacks because we know God has a plan. God enjoys using a chosen remnant like us to shame the wise of the world. What kind of people does God like using?

People who trust God (who we can't see) and not what we can see (vv.10-11)

Ultimately when Israel enters the Millennial reign of Jesus, God will have cut off their enemies but also the things they and we have a tendency to trust in; here using chariots and horses, cities and strongholds. These are the things we can see that we have a tendency to put our trust in. God expects us to trust Him and His invisible Spirit and angelic army resources and His empowering to

live victoriously now as we wait for the return of Jesus. What do we see around us that we are tempting to trust in instead of God who promises us peace and rest when we trust Him to solve our problems and give us victories.

What else does God look for?

People who want their idols removed from their lives (vv.12-14)

In the Millennium Israel will turn completely to God and His Son Jesus. They will not turn to idols or sorcery or make objects of worship. These are the kinds of things God will root out of their life and wants to root out of our life. God can more effectively use us when we too are willing to remove those things in our own life that we turn to for hope, for answers or for security rather than God. He has promised to meet our needs and give us His rest and peace when we cast all our anxieties on Him. And God loves to use

People who want to experience the victory God has in store for us (v.15)

Yes future ultimate victory in the Millennium and in the New Jerusalem but also now. God will execute His wrath on those who reject Him one day. In other words God will bring about final victory over all those who oppose Him and oppose us. And He will use His obedient people to help Him and Jesus to do this as we read in Rev. 19.

So the spiritual principle seems to be, when I obey God I experience small victories in my life now. When I resist the temptation to say or do something hurtful, I experience the victory from God and receive His peace and joy. When I choose something that builds me up spiritually over something that will harm me physically, psychologically and spiritually, I experience the satisfaction and joy of being obedient. Jesus tied obedience and joy together in John 15:

¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

When you obey your employer, coach or parent you are usually commended and it feels good and encourages you to do it again. Even more so with God. We sense His satisfaction through His Spirit affirming our obedient actions when we obey, which should encourage us to obey more.

In Deut. 7:7 says that God did not choose Israel out of all the nations because they were the biggest or the best, He chose them because they were the fewest and that He made promises to them with Abraham. The apostles Paul and Peter adopt that same choosing/elect language to describe how God chooses us out of the rest of the world, to be recipients of His grace and to change our part of the world by filling it with a little more of His glory. Listen to 1 Peter 2:9-10,

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

It's hard sometimes to keep this in mind when the world seems to be falling apart and it would seem we can't do anything about the power players of the world. But keep the Word of God as Your source of truth not the news or social media. Listen to Ps. 2:

¹ Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

² The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,

³ "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles."

⁴ *The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.*

⁵ *He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,*

⁶ *"I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain."*

The Lord laughs at the Pinky and the Brains in the world. Many have come and gone and so will more. Death is the great equalizer because sin is the great equalizer. It's everyone's downfall. And only we who have asked for our sins to be forgiven can be part of the most dramatic changes in the world today. Want to change the world and help usher in Jesus' rule? Share the gospel. Give people good news. Live a life of obedience to God so people will see genuine joy and purpose in life so we make God attractive to them. And for them to trust Him who has the world under His control He's just patiently waiting for more people to believe that by faith before He does it before everyone's eyes.

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