

CHAPTER 4

Comparing this chapter with the close of the foregoing chapter, the comfortable promises here with the terrible threatenings there, we may, with the apostle, “behold the goodness and severity of God,” (Romans 11:22), towards the Jewish church which fell, severity when Zion was ploughed as a field, but towards the Christian church, which was built upon the ruins of it, goodness, great goodness; for it is here promised,

- I. That it shall be advanced and enlarged by the accession of the nations to it (v. 1, 2).
- II. That it shall be protected in tranquility and peace (v. 3, 4).
- III. That it shall be kept close, and constant, and faithful to God (v. 5).
- IV. That under Christ's government, all its grievances shall be redressed (v. 6, 7).
- V. That it shall have an ample and flourishing dominion (v. 8).
- VI. That its troubles shall be brought to a happy issue at length (v. 9, 10).
- VII. That its enemies shall be disquieted, nay, that they shall be destroyed in and by their attempts against it (v. 11-13).

300 MICAH 4:1-7

THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH PREDICTED

It is a very comfortable *but* with which this chapter begins, and very reviving to those who lay the interests of God's church near their heart and are concerned for the welfare of it. When we sometimes see the corruptions of the church, especially of church-rulers, princes, priests, and prophets, seeking their own things and not the things of God, and when we soon after see the desolations of the church, *Zion* for their sakes *ploughed as a field*, we are ready to fear that it will one day perish between both, that the name of Israel shall be no more in remembrance; we are ready to give up all for gone, and to conclude the church will have neither root nor branch upon earth. But let not our faith fail in this matter; out of the ashes

of the church another phoenix shall arise. In the last words of the foregoing chapter we left *the mountain of the house* as desolate and waste as the *high places of the forest*; and is it possible that such a wilderness should ever become a fruitful field again? Yes, the first words of this chapter bring in *the mountain of the Lord's house* as much dignified by being frequented as ever it had been disgraced by being deserted. Though Zion be ploughed as a field, yet God has not *cast off his people*, but by the fall of the Jews salvation has come to the Gentiles, so that it proves to be the riches of the world, ^(~~1811~~) Romans 11:11, 12. This is the mystery which God by the prophet here shows us, and he says the very same in the first three verses of this chapter which another prophet said by the word of the Lord at the same time (^(~~2100~~) Isaiah 2:2-4), that *out of the mouth of these two witnesses* these promises might be established; and very precious promises they are, relating to the gospel-church, which have been in part accomplished, and will be yet more and more, for he is faithful that has promised.

I. That there shall be a church for God set up in the world, after the defection and destruction of the Jewish church, and this in the last days; that is, as some of the rabbin themselves acknowledge, *in the days of the Messiah*. The people of God shall be incorporated by a new charter, a new spiritual way of worship shall be enacted, and a new institution of offices to attend it; better privileges shall be granted by this new charter, and better provision made for enlarging and establishing the kingdom of God among men than had been made by the Old-Testament constitution: *The mountain of the house of the Lord* shall again appear firm ground for God's faithful worshippers to stand, and go, and build upon, in their attendance on him, v. 1. And it shall be a centre of unity to them; a church shall be set up in the world, to which the Lord will be daily *adding such as shall be saved*.

II. That this church shall be firmly founded and well-built: It *shall be established in the top of the mountains*; Christ himself will build it upon a rock; it shall be an impregnable fort upon an immovable foundation, so that the gates of hell shall neither overthrow the one nor undermine the other (^(~~4168~~) Matthew 16:18); its foundations are still in the *holy mountains* (^(~~4300~~) Psalm 87:1), the *everlasting mountains*, which cannot, which shall not, be removed. It shall be established, not as the temple, upon one mountain,

but upon many; for the foundations of the church, as they are sure, so they are large.

III. That it shall be highly advanced, and become eminent and conspicuous: *It shall be exalted above the hills*, observed with wonder for its growing greatness from small beginnings. The kingdom of Christ shall shine with greater lustre than ever any of the kingdoms of the earth did. It shall be as a *city on a hill, which cannot be hid*, ^{<4084>}Matthew 5:14. The glory of this latter house is greater than that of the former, ^{<309>}Haggai 2:9. See ^{<407>}2 Corinthians 3:7, 8, etc.

IV. That there shall be a great accession of converts to it and succession of converts in it. *People shall flow unto it* as the waters of a river are continually flowing; there shall be a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple, while it was standing, to worship there. Then many tribes came to the mountain of the house, to enquire of God's temple; but in gospel-times many nations shall flow into the church, shall *fly like a cloud and as the doves to their windows*. Ministers shall be sent forth to *disciple all nations*, and they shall not *labour in vain*; for, multitudes being wrought upon to believe the gospel and embrace the Christian religion, they shall excite and encourage one another, and shall say, “*Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord* now raised among us, *even to the house of the God of Jacob*, the spiritual temple which we need not travel far to, for it is brought to our doors and set up in the midst of us.” Thus shall people be *made willing in the day of his power* (^{<408>}Psalm 110:3), and shall do what they can to make others willing, as Andrew invited Peter, and Philip Nathanael, to be acquainted with Christ. They shall *call the people to the mountain* (^{<4089>}Deuteronomy 33:19), for there is in Christ enough for all, enough for each. Now observe what it is,

1. Which these converts expect to find in *the house of the God of Jacob*. They come thither for instruction: “*He will teach us of his ways*, what is the way in which he would have us to walk with him and in which we may depend upon him to meet us graciously.” Note, Where we come to worship God we come to be taught of him.

2. Which they engage to do when they are thus taught of God: *We will walk in his paths*. Note, Those may comfortably expect that God will teach them who are firmly resolved by his grace to do as they are taught.

V. That, in order to this, a new revelation shall be published to the world, on which the church shall be founded, and by which multitudes shall be brought into it: *For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* The gospel is here called *the word of the Lord*, for *the Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it*, ^{<1981>}Psalm 68:11. It was of a divine original, a divine authority; it began to be spoken by the Lord Christ himself, ^{<502B>}Hebrews 2:3. And it is *a law*, a law of faith; we are *under the law to Christ*. This was to go *forth from Jerusalem, from Zion*, the metropolis of the Old-Testament dispensation, where the temple, and altars, and oracles were, and whither the Jews went to worship from all parts; thence the gospel must take rise, to show the connexion between the Old Testament and the New, that the gospel is not set up in opposition to the law, but is an explication and illustration of it, and a *branch growing out of its roots*. It was in Jerusalem that Christ preached and wrought miracles; there he died, rose again, and ascended; there the Spirit was poured out; and those that were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations were ordered to *begin at Jerusalem*, so that thence flowed the streams that were to water the desert world.

VI. That a convincing power should go along with the gospel of Christ, in all places where it should be preached (v. 3): *He shall judge among many people.* Messiah, the lawgiver (v. 2.), is here *the judge*, for to him the Father *committed all judgment, and for judgment he came into this world*; his word, the *word of his gospel*, that was to go forth from Jerusalem, was the golden sceptre by which he shall rule and judge when he sits as *king on the holy hill of Zion*, ^{<1916>}Psalm 2:6. By it he shall *rebuke strong nations afar off*; for the Spirit working with the word shall *reprove the world*, ^{<618>}John 16:8. It is promised to the Son of David that he shall *judge among the heathen* (^{<1916>}Psalm 110:6), which he does when in the chariot of his everlasting gospel he goes forth, and goes on, *conquering and to conquer*.

VII. That a disposition to mutual peace and love shall be the happy effect of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah: *They shall beat their swords into plough-shares*; that is, angry passionate men, that have been fierce and furious, shall be wonderfully sweetened, and made mild and meek, ^{<612>}Titus 3:2, 3. Those who, before their conversion, did injuries, and would bear none, after their conversion can bear injuries, but will do none. As far as the gospel prevails it makes men peaceable, for such is *the*

wisdom from above; it is gentle and easy to be entreated; and if nations were but leavened by it, there would be universal peace. When Christ was born there was universal peace in the Roman empire; those that were first brought into the gospel church were all of *one heart and of one soul* (⁴⁰⁶²Acts 4:32); and it was observed of the primitive Christians how well *they loved one another*. In heaven this will have its full accomplishment. It is promised,

1. That none shall be quarrelsome. The art of war, instead of being improved (which some reckon the glory of a kingdom), shall be forgotten and laid aside as useless. They *shall not learn war any more* as they have done, for they shall have no need to defend themselves nor any inclination to offend their neighbours. *Nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation*; not that the gospel will make men cowards, but it will make men peaceable.

2. That all shall be quiet, both from evil and from the fear of evil (v. 4): *They shall sit safely*, and none shall disturb them; they shall sit securely, and shall not disturb themselves, every man *under his vine and under his fig-tree*, enjoying the fruit of them, and needing no other shelter than the leaves of them. *None shall make them afraid*; not only there shall be nothing that is likely to frighten them, but they shall not be disposed to fear. under the dominion of Christ, as that of Solomon, there shall be *abundance of peace*. Though his followers have trouble in the world, in him they enjoy great tranquillity. If this seems unlikely, yet we may depend upon it, *for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it*, and no word of his shall fall to the ground; what he has spoken by his word he will do by his providence and grace. He that is the *Lord of hosts* will be the *God of peace*; and those may well be easy whom *the Lord of hosts*, of all hosts, undertakes the protection of.

VIII. That the churches shall be constant in their duty, and so shall make a good use of their tranquillity and shall not provoke the Lord to deprive them of it, v. 5. When *the churches have rest* they shall be edified, and confirmed, and comforted, and shall resolve to be as firm to their God as other nations are to theirs, though they be no gods. Where we find the foregoing promises, ²³¹¹²Isaiah 2:2, etc. it follows (v. 5), *O house of Jacob! come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord*; and here, *We will walk in the name of the Lord our God*. Note, Peace is a blessing indeed when it strengthens our resolutions to cleave to the Lord. Observe,

1. How constant other nations were to their gods: *All people will walk every one in the name of his god*, will own their god and cleave to him, will worship their god and serve him, will depend upon him and put confidence in him. Whatever men make a god of they will make use of, and take his name along with them in all their actions and affairs. The mariners, in a storm, *cried every man to his god*, ^{<305>}Jonah 1:5. And no instance could be found of a nation's changing its gods, ^{<201>}Jeremiah 2:11: If the hosts of heaven were their gods, they loved them, and served them, and *walked after them*, ^{<200>}Jeremiah 8:2.

2. How constant God's people now resolve to be to him: “*We will walk in the name of the Lord our God*, will acknowledge him in all our ways, and govern ourselves by a continual regard to him, doing nothing but what we have warrant from him for, and openly professing our relation to him.” Observe, Their resolution is peremptory; it is not a thing that needs be disputed: “*We will walk in the name of the Lord our God.*” It is just and reasonable: He is *our God*. And it is a resolution for a perpetuity: “We will do it *for ever and ever*, and will never leave him. He will be ours for ever, and therefore so we will be his, and never repent our choice.”

IX. That notwithstanding the dispersions, distress, and infirmities of the church, it shall be formed and established, and made very considerable, v. 6, 7.

1. The state of the church had been low, and weak, and very helpless, in the latter times of the Old Testament, partly through the corruptions of the Jewish nation, and partly through the oppressions under which they groaned. They were like a *flock of sheep* that were *maimed, worried, and scattered*, ^{<346>}Ezekiel 34:16; ^{<206>}Jeremiah 50:6. 17. The good people among them, and in other places, that were well inclined, were dispersed, were very infirm, and in a manner lost and cast far off.

2. It is promised that all these grievances shall be redressed and the distemper healed. Christ will come himself (^{<152>}Matthew 15:24), and send his apostles to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, ^{<106>}Matthew 10:6. From among the Jews that halted, or that for want of strength, could not go upright, God gathered a remnant (v. 7), that *remnant according to the election of grace* which is spoken of in ^{<517>}Romans 11:7, which embraced the gospel of Christ. And from among the Gentiles that were cast far off (so the Gentiles are described to be, ^{<403>}Ephesians 2:13, ^{<403>}Acts 2:39) he

raised a strong nation; greater numbers of them were brought into the church than of the Jews, ^{<4027>}Galatians 4:27. And such a strong nation the gospel-church is that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. The church of Christ is more numerous than any other nation, and *strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.*

X. That the *Messiah* shall be the king of this kingdom, shall protect and govern it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, and this to the end of time. The Lord Jesus *shall reign over them in Mount Zion* by his word and Spirit in his ordinances, and this *henceforth and for ever, for of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.*

^{<3008>}MICAH 4:8-13

JUDGMENTS AND MERCIES

These verses relate to Zion and Jerusalem, here called the *tower of the flock* or the *tower of Edor*; we read of such a place (^{<1021>}Genesis 35:21) near Bethlehem; and some conjecture it is the same place where the shepherds were keeping their flocks when the angels brought them tidings of the birth of Christ, and some think Bethlehem itself is here spoken of, as ^{<3008>}Micah 5:2. Some think it is a tower at that gate of Jerusalem which is called the *sheep-gate* (^{<4022>}Nehemiah 3:32), and conjecture that through that gate Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem. However, it seems to be put for Jerusalem itself, or for Zion the *tower of David*. All the sheep of Israel flocked thither three times a year; it was the *stronghold* (*Ophel*, which is also a name of a place in Jerusalem, ^{<4027>}Nehemiah 3:27), or castle, of the *daughter of Zion*. Now here,

I. We have a promise of the glories of the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel-church, which is; the tower of the flock, that one fold in which all the sheep of Christ are protected under one Shepherd: *“Unto thee shall it come; that which thou hast long wanted and wished for, even the first dominion, a dignity and power equal to that of David and Solomon, by whom Jerusalem was first raised, that kingdom shall again come to the daughter of Jerusalem, which it was deprived of at the captivity. It shall make as great a figure and shine with as much lustre among the nations, and have as much influence upon them, as ever it had; this is the first or*

chief dominion.” Now this had by no means its accomplishment in Zerubbabel; his was nothing like the first dominion either in respect of splendour and sovereignty at home or the extent of power abroad; and therefore it must refer to the kingdom of the *Messiah* (and to that the Chaldee-paraphrase refers it) and had its accomplishment when God gave to our Lord Jesus *the throne of his father David* (^{<413>}Luke 1:32), set him king upon the holy hill of Zion and gave him the heathen for his inheritance (^{<3916>}Psalm 2:6), made him, his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth, (^{<3827>}Psalm 89:27; ^{<2774>}Daniel 7:14. David, in spirit, called him Lord, and (as Dr. Pocock observes) he witnessed of himself, and his witness was true, that he was greater than Solomon, none of their dominions being like his for extent and duration. The common people welcomed Christ into Jerusalem with *hosannas to the son of David*, to show that it was the *first dominion* that came to the daughter of Zion; and the evangelist applies it to the promise of Zion's king coming to her, ^{<4115>}Matthew 21:5; ^{<3909>}Zechariah 9:9. Some give this sense of the words: To Zion, and Jerusalem that tower of the flock, to the nation of the Jews, came the first dominion; that is, there the kingdom of Christ was first set up, the *gospel of the kingdom* was first preached (^{<4248>}Luke 24:47), there Christ was first called *king of the Jews*.

II. This is illustrated by a prediction of the calamities of the literal Jerusalem, to which some favour and relief should be granted, as a type and figure of what God would do for the gospel-Jerusalem in the last days, notwithstanding its distresses. We have here,

1. Jerusalem put in pain by the providences of God. “She *cries out aloud*, that all her neighbours may take notice of her griefs, because there is *no king in her*, none of that honour and power she used to have. Instead of ruling the nations, as she did when she *sat a queen*, she is ruled by them, and has become a captive. Her *counsellors have perished*; she is no longer at her own disposal, but is given up to the will of her enemies, and is governed by their counsellors. *Pangs have taken her.*”

(1.) She is carried captive to Babylon, and there is in pangs of grief. “She *goes forth out of the city*, and is constrained to *dwell in the field*, exposed to all manner of inconveniences; she *goes even to Babylon*, and there wears out *seventy tedious years* in a miserable captivity, all that while *in pain, as a woman in travail*, waiting to be delivered, and thinking the time very long.”

(2.) When she is delivered out of Babylon, and redeemed from the hand of her enemies there, yet still she is in pangs of fear; the end of one trouble is but the beginning of another; for *now also*, when Jerusalem is in the rebuilding, *many nations are gathered against her*, v. 11. They were so in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, and did all they could to obstruct the building of the temple and the wall. They were so in the time of the Maccabees; they said, *Let her be defiled*; let her be looked upon as a place polluted with sin, and be forsaken and abandoned both of God and man; let her holy places be profaned and all her honours laid in the dust; *let our eye look upon Zion*, and please itself with the sight of its ruins, as it is said of Edom (^{<3112>}Obadiah 1:12, *Thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brother*); let our eyes see our desire upon Zion, the day we have long wished for. When they hear the enemies thus combine against them, and insult over them, no wonder that they are in pain, and cry aloud. *Without are fightings, within are fears.*

2. Jerusalem made easy by the promises of God: “*Why dost thou cry out aloud? Let thy griefs and fears be silenced; indulge not thyself in them, for, though things are bad with thee, they shall end well; thy pangs are great, but they are like those of a woman in travail* (v. 9), that *labours to bring forth* (v. 10), the issue of which will be good at last.” Jerusalem's pangs are not as dying agonies, but as travailing throes, which after a while will be forgotten, for joy that a child is born into the world. Let the literal Jerusalem comfort herself with this, that, whatever straits she may be reduced to, she shall continue until the coming of the Messiah, for there his kingdom must be first set up, and she shall not be destroyed while that blessing is in her; and when at length she is ploughed as a field, and become heaps (as is threatened, ^{<3112>}Micah 3:12), yet her privileges shall be resigned to the spiritual Jerusalem, and in that the promises made to her shall be fulfilled. Let Jerusalem be easy then, for,

(1.) Her captivity in Babylon shall have an end, a happy end (v. 10): *There shalt thou be delivered, and the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thy enemies there.* This was done by Cyrus, who acted therein as God's servant; and that deliverance was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, and the release from our spiritual bondage which is proclaimed in the everlasting gospel, that *acceptable year of the Lord*, in which Christ himself preached *liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that were bound*, ^{<4118>}Luke 4:18, 19.

(2.) The designs of her enemies against her afterwards shall be baffled, nay, they shall turn upon themselves, v. 12, 13. They promise themselves a day of it, but it shall prove *God's day*. They are *gathered against Zion*, to destroy it, but it shall prove to their own destruction, which Israel and Israel's God shall have the glory of.

[1.] Their coming together against Zion shall be the occasion of their ruin. They *associate themselves, and gird themselves*, that they may break Jerusalem in pieces, but it will prove that they shall be broken in pieces, ^{<289>}Isaiah 8:9. *They know not the thoughts of the Lord*. When they are gathering together, and Providence favours them in it, they little think what God is designing by it, nor do they understand his counsel; they know what they aim at in coming together, but they know not what God aims at in bringing them together; they aim at Zion's ruin, but God aims at theirs. Note, When men are made use of as instruments of Providence in accomplishing its purposes it is very common for them to intend one thing and for God to intend quite the contrary. The king of Assyria is to be a rod in God's hand for the correction of his people, in order to their reformation; *howbeit he means not so, nor does his heart think so*, ^{<290>}Isaiah 10:7. And thus it is here; the nations are gathered against Zion, as soldiers into the field, but God gathers them *as sheaves into the floor*, to be beaten to pieces; and they could not have been so easily, so effectually, destroyed, if they had not *gathered together against Zion*. Note, The designs of enemies for the ruin of the church often prove ruining to themselves; and thereby they prepare themselves for destruction and put themselves in the way of it; they are *snared in the work of their own hands*.

[2.] Zion shall have the honour of being victorious over them, v. 13. When they are *gathered as sheaves into the floor*, to be trodden down, as the corn then was by the oxen, then, "*Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Zion!* instead of fearing them, and fleeing from them, boldly set upon them, and take the opportunity Providence favours thee with of trampling upon them. Plead not thy own weakness, and that thou art not a match for so many confederated enemies; God will make *thy horn iron*, to push them down, and *thy hoofs brass*, to tread upon them when they are down; and thus thou shalt *beat in pieces many people*, that have long been beating thee in pieces." Thus, when God pleases, *the daughter of Babylon is made a threshing floor (it is time to thresh her,* ^{<291>}Jeremiah 51:33), and the worm Jacob is made *a threshing instrument*, with which God will *thresh the*

mountains, and make them as chaff, ^{<23414>}Isaiah 41:14, 15. How strangely, how happily, are the tables turned, since Jacob was the threshing-floor and Babylon the threshing instrument! ^{<23210>}Isaiah 21:10. Note, When God has conquering work for his people to do he will furnish them with strength and ability for it, will make the horn iron and the hoofs brass; and, when he does so, they must exert the power he gives them, and execute the commission; even the daughter of Zion must arise, and thresh.

[3.] The glory of the victory shall redound to God. Zion shall thresh these sheaves in the floor, but the corn threshed out shall be a meat-offering at God's altar: *I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord* (that is, I will have it consecrated) and *their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth*. The spoils gained by Zion's victory shall be brought into the sanctuary, and devoted to God, either in part, as those of Midian (^{<0603>}Numbers 31:28), or in whole, as those of Jericho, ^{<0617>}Joshua 6:17. God is Jehovah, the fountain of being; he is the *Lord of the whole earth*, the fountain of power; and therefore he needs not any of our gain or substance, but may challenge and demand it all if he please; and with ourselves we must devote all we have to his honour, to be employed as he directs. Thus far all we have must have *holiness to the Lord* written upon it, all our gain and substance must be *consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth*, ^{<2328>}Isaiah 23:18. And extraordinary successes call for extraordinary acknowledgments, whether they be of spoils in war or gains in trade. It is God that *gives us power to get wealth*, which way soever it is honestly got, and therefore he must be honoured with what we get. Some make all this to point at the defeat of Sennacherib when he besieged Jerusalem, others to the destruction of Babylon, others to the successes of the Maccabees; but the learned Dr. Pocock and others think it had its full accomplishment in the spiritual victories obtained by the gospel of Christ over the powers of darkness that fought against it. The nations thought to ruin Christianity in its infancy, but it was victorious over them; those that persisted in their enmity were *broken to pieces* (^{<0144>}Matthew 21:44), particularly the Jewish nation; but multitudes by divine grace were gained to the church, and they and their substance were consecrated to the Lord Jesus, *the Lord of the whole earth*.