

47. Defining the Gentiles and House of Israel (Jonah; Micah)

Jesus' quoting the words of Micah (Micah 4:13; 5:8–15) to the people at Bountiful (3 Nephi 20:16–19; 21:12–18, 21), and his intertwining them with Isaiah's (3 Nephi 20:35–45; 21:8–10; cf. Isaiah 29:14; 52:1–3, 6–15; 57:18), provides an eye-opening example of how Jesus interprets the words of the prophets and therefore of how we ought to interpret them. At the same time, Jesus provides a clear definition of who are God's people of the house of Israel and who are the Gentiles and what their relationship is to one another. The fact that all of what Jesus interprets he relates to an end-time context, moreover, affirms our imperative to likewise apply the prophets' words to an end-time context and not to revert back to outworn academic views of them.

For those who care to look deeper into these matters, we further observe an about-face switch between the Gentiles and house of Israel. From the way Jesus fills in the gaps between the words of Micah and Isaiah with his own commentary, we discover a complete reversal of circumstances between the house of Israel and the Gentiles. Israel's transgressions in the days of Micah and the divine retribution that followed now parallel the transgressions and divine retribution of the end-time Gentiles. Idolatry, injustices, exploitation, priestcraft, etc. are now the Gentiles' sins for which God punishes them whereas the house of Israel God now restores to covenant blessings.

Here are Micah's words as Jesus quotes them within the context of his own commentary: "I say unto you, that if the Gentiles do not repent after the blessing which they shall receive, after they have scattered my people—Then shall ye, who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth among them; and ye shall be in the midst of them who shall be many; and ye shall be among them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

"And I will gather my people together as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor. For I will make my people with whom the Father hath covenanted, yea, I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass. And thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. And behold, I am he who doeth it. And it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that the sword of my justice shall hang over them at that day; and except they repent it shall fall upon them, saith the Father, yea, even upon all the nations of the Gentiles" (3 Nephi 20:15–20; cf. Micah 4:13; 5:8–15).

The "Gentiles" in this context are the Latter-day Saints—those who have received the "blessing" of his restored gospel but who now must repent or perish. Jesus repeats that idea by saying of the Gentiles, "When they shall have received the fulness of my gospel, then if they shall harden their hearts against me I will return their iniquities upon their own heads, saith the Father. And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever, saith the Father. And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them; And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name." (3 Nephi 20:28–31).

We thus observe that when the Gentiles harden their hearts against the fulness of the gospel—sometime after they have received it—Israel’s natural lineages accept it and are restored to their rightful inheritance. Elsewhere, I discuss how the end-time Gentiles consist of descendants of Ephraim who assimilated into the Gentiles and became identified with them (see also Doctrine & Covenants 109:60).

Jesus follows up this commentary by quoting many of the words of Isaiah, a few of which I mention here: “And then shall their watchmen lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye. Then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance. Then shall they break forth into joy—Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Father hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the Father and I are one” (3 Nephi 20:32–35; cf. Isaiah 52:8–10). See, additionally, 3 Nephi 20:36–45 (quoting Isaiah 52:1–3, 6–15), which predicts the house of Israel’s end-time restoration.

Jesus’ second mention of Micah’s words appears within a similar context in which he again quotes the words of Isaiah: “Behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.

“And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off. Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots; And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds; And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers;

“Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities. And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel; And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard” (3 Nephi 21:10–21; cf. Micah 5:8–15; Isaiah 52:14; 57:18).

In conclusion, the house of Israel—known as the “remnant of Jacob” in an end-time context—believes the fulness of the gospel at the time the Ephraimite Gentiles reject it. These

things fulfill the words of Micah in relation to the end-time Gentiles' retribution and also the words of Isaiah in relation to the house of Israel's restoration.