

THE MISSION OF GOD...

THE COMING SHEPHERD KING

God's Glorious Unexpected Gift to a Burdened and Sinful People

Micah 4-5

Introduction:

- Rather than familial identification, Micah identifies himself by his geographical location; 22 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

- Micah's name literally means "Who is like Yahweh?" Interestingly and applicably, he closes his book of prophecy with the question, "Who is a God like you?" (Micah 7:18)

- Micah's prophetic ministry is concurrent with the Judean kings Jotham (750 B.C.), Ahaz (735-715), and Hezekiah (715-687) as well as the prophetic ministries of Hosea and Isaiah of these same time periods.

- The themes of Micah's prophecy are judgment and restoration. The book can basically be divided up into 3 sections or cycles each with these two themes apparent.

Thus, the book is divided as follows:

1. Chapters 1-2 - Judgment and Restoration

2. Chapters 3-5 - Judgment and Restoration

3. Chapters 6-7 - Judgment and Restoration.

- Micah targets Israel and Judah (northern and southern Israel areas), at this point before the northern kingdom of Israel had fallen. His message is urgent in the form of dire warning of impending judgment if the people persisted in their sin.

- While the warning of God's impending judgment is dire, this same God is also faithful, gracious, merciful, and will accomplish His plan for humanity. Thus, amidst the judgment warnings, each section (or cycle) also contains a big picture passage focusing on God's gracious, merciful, and faithful work of preserving a remnant and restoring His people.

- One of the targets Micah focuses on (Jerusalem) is indicted for their social abuse, civic corruption, and injustice. The people who were called to live as the people of God in humility, submission to God's expectations, a people concerned with integrity, honor, and justice, and a people compassionate for the poor are instead a people who live for self, are prideful, dishonest, corrupt in justice, devaluing and trampling of the poor, and even violent. One commentator comments, "His whole message might almost be summed up in this one sentence: Those who live selfish and luxurious lives, even though they offer costly sacrifices, are vampires in the sight of God, sucking the life-blood of the poor." (Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 96-97)

- What an indictment we read of the people in Jerusalem and in the northern kingdom because of their continual rebellion against God's ways. They were called to more than this. Their very existence served to glorify their Redeemer God. Yet, they were living completely opposite to their calling. Micah declares this purpose in 6:8, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and

to love kindness, and to walk humbly with you God?" Micah thus warns of coming judgment.

- What were the sins of God's people? Micah lists several, "In the Book of Micah itself, the condemned include idolatry (1:7; 5:13-14), prostitution (including religious prostitution (1:7), plotting evil and carrying it out (2:1), coveting the property of others and taking it through fraud (2:2), rejection of true prophets and following false prophets (2:6, 11), robbery (2:8), taking advantage of women and children (2:9), oppression (3:1-3), distortion of justice (3:1-3), distortion of justice (3:9), bloodshed (3:10), bribery (3:11), ill-gotten gains (4:13), depending on military power instead of the Lord (5:10-11), witchcraft (5:12), cheating (6:10-11), violence (6:12), lies and deception (6:12), following the practices of [wicked] Omri and Ahab (6:16), and hostility within families (7:6)." (Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, 40)

What did God long for His people? "What the Lord desires from His covenant people, as well as from others, is uprightness (2:7; 7:2), justice (3:1, 8), obedience (4:2; 5:15; 6:8), good stewardship (4:13b), listening to Him (6:1, 9), remembering His mighty acts (6:5), knowing His righteous acts (6:5b), what is good (6:8), acting justly (6:8), showing faithful covenant love (6:8; 7:2), humility (6:8), the fear of God (6:9; 7:17), wisdom (6:9), hoping for the Lord (7:7), and waiting for him (7:7)." (Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, 38)

- The commentator Barker further writes regarding Micah's predictions of judgment, "Other predictions in the book include the destruction of Samaria which occurred at the hand of Shalmaneser V and his successor Sargon II (1:6-7); the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib (1:9-16); the fall of Jerusalem and the temple (3:12); the deportation to Babylon (4:10); the return from exile and the restoration to the land of Judah (2:12-13; 4:9-10); peace and joy under a theocratic government and the spiritual supremacy of Israel (4:1-8, 13; 7:11, 14-17)." (Barker, Kenneth, *NAC*, 37)

- Regarding the restoration themes interspersed throughout the judgment portions, Paul's Romans 11:22 alternating speech between God's sternness and His compassion gives us further enlightenment. In this manner, Micah alternates from oracles of doom and oracles of deliverance. (Barker, *NAC*, 37)

- As we come to Micah 5 today, we come right in the middle of the second of three cycles of judgment and restoration that Micah prophesies.

It is verse two in this text that draws our particular attention at Christmas time, for it is here that we read of Messiah's prophesied birth place.

However, the context of this notable verse is enlightening for us God's people today.

So, how does Micah's prophecy about Israel's rebellion and their impending judgment and yet restoration as well as this prediction of Jesus' birthplace relate to us the church today at Christmas time?

The Text:

Context Leading to Chapter 5:

- Again, it is important to note the connection chapter 5 has as part of this middle of 3 cycles of judgment and restorative deliverance. Thus, here in chapter 5, chapter 3 builds to the future restorative promises of chapter 4, which then builds to the glorious focus on the future Messianic deliverance foretold in chapter 5.

- In chapter 3 Micah targets the compromise of the nation's leaders as well as the spiritual leaders. Even the spiritual leadership sunk into corruption and a prideful focus on their own financial gain, all under the authority of "ministry." It is because of the leadership's continual corruption and compromise, that Micah warns of God's coming severe judgment on Jerusalem (later fulfilled in part by Assyria and completely by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the 586 B.C. invasion and destruction as well as in the NT era at the A.D. 70 Roman leveling of Jerusalem)

Regarding the Babylonian fulfillment of this destruction, Jeremiah in 26:18 quotes Micah 3:12 a century later.

- The beginning of Chapter 4 transitions to a restorative tone.

Although Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed in judgment as declared in chapter 3, chapter 4 looks to the greater, ultimate eschatological scene of God's full redemption and restoration of Israel to its highest glory.

(Interestingly, Micah's contemporary prophet, Isaiah, declares the same prophetic revelation in Isaiah 2:2-4.)

- The scene in chapter 4 is after the second coming of Christ, when all the promises to Israel will be fully realized. This will be a time when Christ will reign from His literal throne in the renewed temple of Jerusalem and all nations will flock to this epicenter of glorified rule (a complete fulfillment of Genesis 12:3 and also referred to in Malachi 1:11-14). "The teaching of God's ways will flow from Jerusalem outward to all nations." (notes on Micah 4:2, ESV Study Bible, p. 1701)

*** This restoration, centered on Jerusalem, would be in fulfillment of the Davidic-shepherd-king promise. This new Messianic Ruler, would be the true SHEPHERD-KING for Israel and all nations (4:8).**

The end of chapter 4 moves back to a judgment focus that then culminates in deliverance as the chapter concludes. The latter part of chapter 4 (from verse 9 forward) actually begins a series of 3 consecutive oracles of judgment and salvation that are all introduced by "Now."

1. [The FIRST judgment-salvation oracle] (4:9-10)

- The loss of a king was a big deal for Israel, which served as a visible representative of God's rule. Who would rule them?

- Judgment would indeed come ultimately from Babylon (Assyria's threats wouldn't prove to be successful in God's merciful deliverance). Israel would eventually be taken to Babylon where they would experience God's restoration and deliverance of a remnant (mentioned in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) [through Persia].

- This restoration came after the rise of the Persian empire over Babylon in the time of Esther under the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah.

2. [The SECOND judgment-salvation oracle] (4:11-13)

- All of God's enemies will be on the offense against God's people, but it will ultimately be futile.

- Specifically, the context is Israel and Jerusalem, likely in the future yet to come for us even today.

- No matter the offensive effort against God's people, He will one day restore them and they will defeat every foe of God. Despite the offense of the enemies (whether Assyria, Babylon, Rome, Germany, the Middle East, etc.), God's plan for His people WILL Prevail!

- What an incredible privilege we have to be a small part in God's plan of redemption for the ages!

Paul tells us in Romans 11 that we Gentiles are graciously grafted into the full redemptive plan of God as we live in the age of the church.

May we faithfully serve our SHEPHERD-KING together!

3. [The THIRD judgment-salvation oracle] (5:1-4)

- As the third oracle within this greater middle of the total three judgment-restoration sections in Micah's book, chapter 5 begins with a call to summon the troops.

- However, the language here shows the weakness and futility of Israel's king (either Sennacherib with the Assyrian invasion or Nebuchadnezzar with the Babylonian invasion) to defend Israel against the invading siege. If referencing the latter Babylonian invasion, then the end of verse 1 literally likely referred to the striking and gauging out of King Zedekiah's eyes.

- In *verse 2* Micah has includes the glorious conjunction, "But..."

He links the unlikely calling of the shepherd boy David to kingship and the promise of the Davidic covenant to the coming Messianic Ruler. This long foretold and sought-for King would come from unlikely Bethlehem, just as the unlikely shepherd boy David.

- As Paul would echo in *1 Corinthians 1:26-29*, God often delights to work through the ordinary things in the world to confound the "wise" of the world.

- "Compared to Jerusalem with its magnificent buildings (3:10, Bethlehem is characterized as 'small'... This probably applies to both size and significance... 'Out of seeming littleness and weakness God has perfected strength.'" (Barker, NAC, 97)

- Bethlehem Ephrathah meant "house of bread" or "fruitfulness."

However, "Who could have dreamed that so unimportant a place would breed David? Of all the clans of the tribe of Judah, the Ephrathite clan around Bethlehem would hardly supply a respectable army unit at times of tribal levy. How strange that God summoned a man of his choice from so insignificant a source! He can take acorns and turn them into mighty oaks; Jerusalem and her king are reassured that, low though they have sunk in the eyes of the world and shrunken though the royal power is, yet God can restore and grant new greatness. Yahweh has not cast aside the David covenant." (Allen, Leslie, *NICOT: Micah*, 343) (*note 1 Samuel 16:1, David's calling*)

"From a dynasty now diminished in a way reminiscent of its beginnings in Bethlehem's tiny clan, there will issue a national leader under God, to rule over a people who are heirs of the ancient tribal federation. This royal promise secures with it the destiny of God's people." (Allen, *NICOT: Micah*, 343)

The end of verse 2 most often translates something like, "whose coming forth is from of old; from ancient days." (ESV, etc.)

Without getting bogged down on this too much, the Hebrew literally carries the idea of "origins" (plural) "from a time long ago", "from these days long gone by".

While the eternity of Christ is proclaimed clearly elsewhere, the focus here of Micah is the sovereign, masterful plan of God in Messiah through being proclaimed through generations of people in Israel's past history, specifically related to the tribe of Judah and Bethlehem.

Great significance seen in Bethlehem through the thread of Scripture...

- * Genesis 12:3 - God said all families blessed through Abraham's offspring.
- * That promise would specifically come through Judah (Genesis 49) and the line of Perez (1 Chronicles 2:4).
- * Ruth 4:18ff - The line of Perez is detailed all the way to Jesse, the father of David.
- * 1 Samuel 16:1 - God told Samuel to look for a king from the family of Jesse of Bethlehem (David born in Bethlehem).
- * Luke 2:4 - Joseph is from Bethlehem.
- * Luke 2:11 - Jesus Messiah is born in Bethlehem.
- * Acts 2:33-36 - Peter connects the Davidic covenant (quoting Psalm 110:1) to that of Jesus! David's reign would continue... how? It would be fulfilled eternally in Jesus!
- * This Jesus, God has made both Lord and Messiah!
- * The Jesus of Bethlehem (gloriously foretold in Micah 5:2) is from old foretelling of God Himself is indeed the long-awaited Messiah!
- * Oh, this sovereign God is worthy of our CONFIDENT TRUST and ADORATION!

- Amidst this bleak outlook of Israel's sin, the coming judgment of Assyria and Babylon, there is hope! For God has not forgotten His covenant. Israel will rise again through God's work of redemption.

Furthermore, Israel's influence in birthing the Messiah will bring in many more into the Kingdom than ever expected... all nations!

- This big picture outlook is likely in view in the prophet's next few verses.

When he speaks of giving them up until the birth of the one in labor, he likely speaks of allowing the judgment of foreign nations to come (Assyria and Babylon) until the birth of this prophesied Messiah.

It is this One that will be the SHEPHERD-KING, ruling over God's flock.

This SHEPHERD-KING will be Israel's peace.

* He will offer a way of true lasting peace with the Father.

* He will bring peace in a most unexpected way, breaking down the hostility between Jew and Gentile under the Gospel. (connected to and beginning to be introduced in *Matthew 2:6* and specifically mentioned by Paul in *Ephesians 2:14*).

* When Micah speaks of the Assyrian, he speaks literally of the current threat, but also likely poetically speaks of all future enemy threats against Israel and the coming full-all-nations-people-of-God.

* When Micah speaks of raising up 7 shepherds and 8 princes of men, he likely refers to God-ordained leaders who serve as undershepherds for the Chief SHEPHERD-KING. These spiritual leaders (like what Israel's corrupt leaders in Micah's day were called to) are called to shepherd God's people for the Good Shepherd (the SHEPHERD-KING) against all of God's enemies.

This seems then to have literal implications for the current Assyrian threat, but also greater implications for God's enemies throughout the ages.

The big "game changer" in all of this is the actual coming of the long-awaited SHEPHERD-KING!

Conclusion:

- Throughout the history of God's people (whether OT Israel or us the Gentile church today), God's desires for a set apart redeemed people living out the redemption they've been given remain unchanged. If you are a follower of Jesus, we as God's redeemed people then carry the responsibility of living like we are truly redeemed!

- In Micah's day, Israel and Judah fell prey to corruption, self-centeredness, injustice, devaluing the poor and neglected, and a persistence to continue in their rebellion to God's calling on their lives.

Yet, the glorious reality in Micah's day rested in God's faithful plan full of grace and mercy!

- Likewise, in our own day we that claim to follow Jesus I fear often fall into a similar position as in Micah's day. Do we as followers of Jesus really understand the awesome redemption we've been given?

Do we as followers of Jesus really grasp how awesome God's grace really is?

Do we as followers of Jesus really know how amazing God's mercy truly is?

Do we as followers of Jesus today LIVE like we truly GRASP the AWESOMENESS of our REDEMPTION CALLING?

I fear that there are many, especially in the Christmas season, who claim to follow Jesus, yet live lives of self-centeredness and rebellion to the actual life of holiness growth that God calls His followers to live.

- Maybe you come to this passage today, and you identify more with those in Micah's day who truly would not be able to identify themselves as God's redeemed.

Maybe you've never embraced this Shepherd-King (Jesus) prophesied in this text as your personal Redeemer?

Maybe this Christmas season, God would reveal to you the awesomeness of His redemption calling!

Maybe this Christmas season, you would become overwhelmed at the grace and mercy of our Great God!

Maybe this Christmas season, you would stand in awe at the awesome sovereign plan of our Almighty God, as foretold by Micah and revealed some 2,000 years ago in Jesus the very Christ!

Paul tells us in Ephesians that God foreknew in eternity past His amazing plan to send Jesus in the manner in which He came to rescue us from our sins!

The truth foretold and now realized from Micah 5:2 stands as a staggering declaration to the completely faithful and pure, holy love of our gracious and merciful God's plan of redemption that we reflect on at Christmas!

The commentator Craigie writes, "Matthew's quotation of Micah's prophecy [Matt 2:6] has set it in a new perspective for the Christian reader of the Old Testament. The deliverer has come to this world in the person of Jesus; like David, Jesus is the new Shepherd of God's sheep, offering security from external enemies and a life of security. Jesus, of the Davidic line, is above all a gift of God to this world. To those who feel shut in on every side, like the besieged citizens of Jerusalem who first heard these words, Jesus brings the prospect of deliverance and security. And that is the essence of the Christmas message: God makes a gift to a besieged world through whom deliverance may come." (Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, 40.)

Regardless of where you may be today in your relationship with our Creator God, will you consider the staggering work of our Amazing God!

No matter where you've been, no matter what you've done, our Redeemer God extends His calling to embrace Him in faith today!

Believer, stand in renewed awe at the amazing work of our Faithful, Shepherd-King... our Redeemer God... this Christmas season!

Unbeliever, come to Him. Abandon your life at the foot of the manger, at the foot of the cross, at the foot of His throne in heaven!