

Micah 5:1-2, Matthew 1:18-25

“The Prophecy, The Person, The Purpose”

Surely *consideration* of Jesus leads to the *celebration* of Jesus. That God would love us such to the extent that He would send His only begotten Son to be born & live *among* us, to identify *with* us, & to die *for* us is a love that is difficult if not impossible to fully comprehend. But I'm so glad that salvation isn't contingent upon *understanding everything* that God has done for us, but upon *believing* in what He's done for us in the Person of J.C. who *has* loved us & given Himself *for* us... I'm gonna be honest w/you, I don't *understand* it all. But I *do* believe it all...

God has proven again & again the trustworthiness of His word through the means of prophecy. We've spoken quite a lot about that lately in our studies in the book of Isaiah. God will tell us something we *wouldn't* otherwise know; that we *couldn't* otherwise know unless He told us. Then, when it comes to pass, it verifies & ratifies the fact that He's God & that His word is true.

& By way of reminder, God will sometimes speak *minutes* in advance, or *days* in advance, perhaps *years* or even *hundreds* of years or more! In fact, sometimes He may speak of a situation currently, then zing down the prophetic pipeline hundreds or thousands of years, then snap right back to the present reality in the span of a single Vs or 2... God, isn't subject to time, so He will speak (on the occasion) w/out regard to time & He's perfectly w/in His rights to do that.

For those of you who are w/us regularly on Sundays, you may be interested to know that Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah's. Oftentimes when we're reading through a particular prophet we can get a little tunnel vision & think that they were the only prophet on the scene at the time they were prophesying. But the truth is that it wasn't uncommon to have multiple prophets, ministering concurrently affirming & confirming God's word by the mouths of 2 or more witnesses. So, when we step into Micah Ch 5 we're somewhere around 700 yrs before the birth of J.C. Let's look together beginning in Vs 1.

Vs 1-2

Again, if you've been w/us on Sundays, you understand Vs 1. Historically, what God is saying is that a great time of humiliation was on the horizon for the nation of Judah. Babylon would carry them away into captivity about 100 yrs from this point...

But what we want to look at this morning is the hope that God brings into the equation. How many of you realize that God will never leave His people w/out hope? He's always leading us out of darkness, into the light.

The only ones who are w/out hope are those who are w/out God in the world. Yes, a time of humiliation was coming, (the ramifications of their sin), but equally true is the fact that a time of great *exaltation* would come through this One who would be “Ruler in Israel” whom God would raise up out of the humble birthplace of Bethlehem...

Now, you & me, when we hear of this “little town of Bethlehem” it rings incredibly familiar in our ears, doesn’t it? And you should know, even in ancient Israel it was well known as the birthplace of David (the greatest king ever to be *enthroned* in Israel). However, beyond that, Bethlehem (plainly put) was never a city that wielded any kind of influence whatsoever.

Think for a moment of the great & influential cities of the ancient world. – Is “Bethlehem” one that readily springs to mind? 😊 Probably not! ... Put yourself in God’s position. If You’re going to bring Your only Son into the world, where would You choose to do that? – If it’s *me*, I’m thinking pomp & pageantry, perhaps *Rome*, the political center of the world. Think of how quickly the news of His birth could spread from the well-formed roads of the Roman Empire!

Or maybe we don’t go for the political center of the world, but the *intellectual* center of the world – Athens! People probing the depth of life’s mysteries, being mesmerized by His miraculous entrance being both Deity & Humanity... Or we could skip the political capital & the intellectual capital & go straight for the *religious* epicenter of the world – Jerusalem! It represents both rich spiritual heritage, deep scriptural studies. It would make sense for the Ruler of Israel to come forth from a place like *Jerusalem*. But Bethlehem?

If Joplin were Jerusalem, Bethlehem would be Duenweg... 😊 Except Joplin doesn’t compare to Jerusalem. But my point is it’s just a little po-dunk town about 5 miles outside of Jerusalem of virtually no great influence, no real significance be it on a global or even national scale! It’s *always been*, “O little town of Bethlehem”. Even in the cities of Judah... Micah says, “you are little (insignificant) among *the thousands* of Judah.”

* The One to be “Ruler in Israel”, the One who would *deliver His people*, would be born in a small, otherwise insignificant town. So lack luster (in fact) that when scripture mentions the towns in which the clans of Judah would inhabit (Josh 15, Neh 11), Bethlehem doesn’t even invoke an honorable mention! It’s not listed at all!

But what’s falling into focus for us is the principle that’s often displayed throughout scripture & that is this...

God delights to *choose*; delights to *use*, “the least of these”. He has a tendency to stay away (generally, not categorically) from the “who’s who” & grabs hold of & uses mightily the “who’s he”? (This is where you could write down 1 Cor 1:26-31 to read later).

The Messiah would come from a place of “humble beginnings”. Not a place of renown, of pomp or pageantry or great spiritual history, but from a place – of humility. *

& This is one of the details of prophecy that scripture gives to us. God spoke of the very town that the Messiah would be born in some 700 yrs in advance! ... It would be this passage that the scribes would turn to when king Herod would inquire of them (for nefarious purposes) where the Christ was to be born (Matt 2:6).

& Don’t miss the details. We have the Messiah’s mission directive right here. The One to be “Ruler in Israel” would come forth (God says) ... “to Me.” What does that mean? It means that the express agenda of the Messiah would be to *not be* about His *own* will, but rather He would be devoted & dedicated to the will of the One who sent Him. – The Christ would come to the earth in order to *serve & fulfill the Father’s will*... To accomplish *His plan, His purpose*... Consequently, over & over again throughout the gospels we find Jesus referring to this fact. Jn 6:38, “*For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”*¹ Jn 8:29, “*The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”*² Think about the magnitude of that statement! I *always* do those things that please the Father... *Always?* Always. How would you like to be able to say that? When you get to the High Priestly prayer of Jesus in Jn 17, we find Him uttering these words, “*I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.*”³

Jesus wasn’t here to do whatever He wanted to do. He came to fulfill the directives, the objective of the Father. (I’ll give you 1 more). Heb 10:7, “*Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.’*”⁴

* Something else Micah 5:2 sets on the shelf for us to admire & be assured of is the fact that even though the Messiah would come forth *from* Bethlehem, His origins weren’t found *in* Bethlehem. His, “goings forth” are from of old (notice) from *everlasting*. That is, from, “days of immeasurable time.” – Here Micah is moving beyond the *humanity* of Jesus (being born through Mary, He was fully human), but coming out of *eternity* Micah begins now to highlight His *Deity*. –

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 6:38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 8:29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 17:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 10:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Let's not be confused on this point. Jesus didn't begin to exist as a little Bethlehem baby, lying in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. His goings forth are from of old, from *everlasting*... It's true that He wrapped (or robed) Himself in humanity when He *came* to Bethlehem, but He existed (in His deity) from before time began!

I mentioned Isaiah to you during our time of introduction. In Ch 9 of his book we read this, *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*⁵ Yes, a Child would be born (pointing to His humanity), but don't miss it, unto us a "Son" would be given (pointing to His deity). The Child would be born in Bethlehem, the Son's going forth are from of old, from everlasting...

Before creation ever existed, Jesus was there as the eternal 2nd Person of the Godhead. The Psalm of Moses says it this way, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."*⁶ In the Hebrew it's incredibly vivid, "From the vanishing point in the past to the vanishing point in the future, You are God." *What that means is that you can go back in your mind just as far as you can fathom, & when you just can't comprehend any farther back, Jesus was before that. Same w/the future, go as far forward as you possibly can, Jesus will be there after that. He's the Alpha & the Omega, the beginning & the end.**

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*⁷ Colossians tells us that He is before all things & in Him all things consist.

"Before all things..." Before creation existed, He was there. (God the Son is as eternal as is God the Father & God the Holy Spirit.) Yet He came *into* creation at the appointed time, by way of a little country bumpkin kind of town. Bethlehem.

Why? What was the purpose of His coming? — ** How many of you realize that God sees the oppression, knows the sorrows & hears the cry of His people? ... When the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt there was nothing they could do to free themselves. They were in chains, they were in bondage, they were oppressed & heavy laden... & There's the Lord speaking to Moses from the burning bush in Ex Ch 3.*

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 9:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 90:2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 1:1-3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This is what He says, *"I have surely seen the oppression of My people... and have heard their cry, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them..."*⁸ In the NT vernacular Jesus said it like this, *"...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*⁹ Remember what the angel said to the shepherds? *"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*¹⁰ *

Let's look at it together.

Matthew Ch 1

Vs 18

One of the things that has always blown my mind about the Bible is how it can take a statement (or a happening) of incredible *enormity* & speak of it so *nonchalantly* (almost in passing). – How many times have you read Vs 18 & just kept going w/out really stopping to consider what's truly being said? After Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they came together (they weren't yet married), "she was found w/child of the Holy Spirit." Wait... what!?

A mind-blowing miracle! The Holy Spirit *overshadows* her, life is supernaturally *formed* in her & it gets summed up in a single (otherwise what would seem to be uneventful) sentence! – But I feel like we need to pump the brakes on this one for just a second! 😊

Yet for as seemingly simple as the statement is, it's one of the things we love about the word of God. It never *defends* itself; it only *declares* itself. There's no need to justify it, rationalize it, explain it, or gratify our curiosity.

If God speaks it, that settles it. He doesn't *need* to defend Himself, but He will *declare* Himself. So we don't *find* God defending His word, He only declares His word... The Bible declares itself *historically* (this is what did happen). It declares itself *prophetically* (this is what *will* happen) & it declares itself *miraculously*, (for w/God nothing will be impossible). *

& From the very beginning God had *declared* that a virgin would conceive & bring forth a Savior. Genesis Ch 3, directly after the fall God declared to the serpent that the "Seed" of the woman would crush his head. Women don't carry the seed, they carry the egg. But God said there would be a woman whose (S)eed would *crush* the serpent, *defeat* the serpent & bring salvation to man.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ex 3:7-8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Lk 19:10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Lk 2:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Flash forward several thousand yrs to a little town called Nazareth to a young lady by the name of Mary; the angel Gabriel comes to her, tells her that God has a plan for her & though she's a virgin the Holy Spirit will come upon her, the power of the Highest will overshadow her & she will conceive & bring forth the Son of God...

Listen, If we can get past Gen 1:1, than the rest of this is no test for our faith at all... If in the beginning God created the heavens & the earth, formed man from dust, breathed into his nostrils & gave him life; than for God to overshadow a young woman & create life into her womb apart from human relations is nothing at all; He is the *Author* of life.

& Let's be careful to remind ourselves. If Jesus were conceived & born as any other Child, He *couldn't be God*. He *had* to enter the world through an earthly *mother* (that would make Him fully human) but He couldn't have an earthly *father*, so Mary was found w/Child of the Holy Spirit.

But this throws a bit of a hitch in our giddy up. Because she was "betrothed" to Joseph. It was a season in a couple's lives whereby they weren't formally together, but they were basically considered married. It took a divorce to annul a betrothal. It was a period of time that would ensure the purity of the bride, ensuring she wasn't pregnant before they consummated their marriage. & It's during this phase of their relationship that lo' & behold... Mary turns up pregnant.

You're Joseph, what do you do? Even if Mary tried to explain it, are you buying it? How do you respond to, "God just miraculously made me pregnant!" It's like, "Really?" "You're pulling the 'God' card?" I mean, you *want* to believe her, but there's no way!

Vs 19-21

Wow... Can you imagine that!?! A few things we want to make mention of here, not the least of which is this. * When God purchased you through the blood of J.C. there's no part of your life that's "off limits". In fact He owns what we might call the "editing rights" to our lives. If He wants to change this thing, remove that thing, add something altogether different (whether we understand it or not) it's His prerogative to do that! *

No doubt Joseph is praying over all this, thinking about it, wanting to do the right thing, so he chooses rather than to humiliate her *publicly* he'll just divorce her *privately*. Evidently, he just couldn't wrap his mind around this, "An angel *visited* me, the Holy Spirit *overshadowed* me..." conversation that Mary perhaps tried to have w/him & understandably so.

But there he is, he just can't quit thinking about it. & As he's thinking he drifts off to sleep. And what do you know? An angel of the Lord appears to *him!* & Immediately he's called to attention because the angel addresses him as "Joseph, son of David." (Referencing his legal lineage to the throne of David). Trust me when I tell you, this was not the common way he was addressed... there's something happening here...

& The angel instructs/informs him in a number of ways. First of all, he puts an end to this notion of divorce that Joseph had. He says, "Don't be afraid to take to you Mary your wife." How many of you sought the Lord to make sure the one you were marrying was God's will for you? Joseph had no doubts! 2^{ndly}, The angel affirms the supernatural, mysterious, miraculous nature of her pregnancy as the work of the Holy Spirit. 3^{rdly}, He's told that the child would be a Boy. * He's told that he was to name Him "Jesus" & that His name would announce His mission. "Jesus" means, "The Lord is Salvation." – You shall call His name "Jesus" *for* He will save His people from their sins.

The *Person* in her womb (being fully God, fully Man) would be called *Jesus*, the *Purpose* of this Person, "He will save His people from their sins." He's not here for *political* reasons, but for *spiritual* reasons. He's not here to save you from Rome, from left wing liberals or the progressive political party... He's come to save you from your sins. He's come to set you free from the *penalty* of your sins, the *power* of your sins & ultimately (eternally) the *very presence* of your sin.

How so? Through the shedding of His blood. The wages of sin is death & w/out the shedding of blood there can be no remission, for the life of the flesh is in the blood & it's the blood (Lev 17:11) that makes atonement for the soul... So Jesus would serve as the substitutionary sacrifice for you & me... * He would die in our place & the angel made Joseph aware of this before Jesus was ever born...

Vs 22-23

Do you see how God affirms His word again & again? The prophecy, the Person, the Purpose... This wasn't a contingency plan, God wasn't shooting from the hip. He was fulfilling the promise He'd made 700 yrs prior! "*The virgin shall be w/Child, & bear a Son, & they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God w/us.'*" Wait... is this saying that Jesus is God? Yes! That's exactly what this is saying! The name "Jesus" speaks to His *operation* (to bring salvation). "Immanuel" speaks to His *identification*, "God w/us."

Do you see what I mean when I say that the consideration, the contemplation of Jesus should lead to adoration & celebration? What Child is this? "God w/us."

Think about this, God has taken the initiative to introduce Himself to you in the Person of J.C. How exciting, how amazing is that?

Vs 24-25 Close

God had said that He would bring a Savior (His Son) into the world. He'd declared it *prophetically*, said that it would happen *miraculously*. & That's exactly what happened. God keeps His word...

& He has said that He will send His Son into the world again; God keeps His word & every day brings us closer *to* the day that we will see Jesus face to face. If you're not ready for that moment, I'd encourage you to get that way. Believe on the Lord J.C. & be saved. You don't have to understand it... Believe it...

Prayer Points

Lord, we thank You for Your word. Our hearts are filled w/celebration for what You've done, Adoration for who You are & that You would love us & give Yourself for us is truly overwhelming to us.

From the little town of Bethlehem. It's interesting "Bethlehem" means "house of bread". Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life". He's the One who truly satisfies the deepest hunger in the heart of man. So, if you're unsatisfied w/this world. Find a longing, a void in your heart that refuses to be filled... taste & see that the Lord is good. Call upon the name of the Lord & be saved.