

Lesson 103

God Promises the Messiah

God's plan of redemption was in place before time.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God had always planned that he would send a Savior to redeem fallen man. This plan is seen throughout the Old Testament, including the prophecies of Micah and Isaiah. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fulfilled these detailed prophecies, reminding us that God's plan to send a Redeemer was in place before time began.

Key Passages

Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1; John 1:1–2; Micah 7:18–19; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21–23; Isaiah 53:5–7

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect the prophecy in Micah to the person of Jesus.

- Explain the significance of Isaiah's prophecies as they relate to the birth and death of Jesus.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:4–5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved

us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The gospel—the good news of the redemption of sinners through the promised Messiah—is woven like a scarlet thread throughout the Bible, pointing to something wonderful that would surely come to fulfillment. We see the promise of the coming Messiah from the moment creation was cursed (Genesis 3:15), and the Old Testament continuously bears witness that the promised redemption is coming. Micah and Isaiah were among the prophets of God who had the privilege of announcing the coming Messiah.

Isaiah was a prophet during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in the southern kingdom of Judah. His ministry lasted from about 760 to 700 BC and was primarily focused on Judah. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, ministering to both Israel to the north and Judah to the south. He preached in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His message concerned what he saw regarding Samaria and Jerusalem (Micah 1:1). He prophesied from around 760 to

710 BC. His proclamations and warnings were being sounded as Samaria fell to the Assyrians in 721 BC.

Although Micah pronounced judgment on the people for their mistreatment of the poor (Micah 2:2), for false teachers (Micah 2:6), and for idolatry, he also spoke with hope of a light that would shine brightly into the future—a time when people would walk in the name of the Lord God forever and ever (Micah 4:5). Similarly, Isaiah's prophecies not only included calls to repentance from sin but also presented the hope of a future deliverer. Both men told of the future revelation of the Messiah, the Savior—who he was and how he would be identified.

Micah 5:2 and 5:4 tell of four characteristics regarding the coming Messiah. First, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Second, the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Third, the Messiah would be eternal. And fourth, in Micah 5:4, the Messiah would act as a strong shepherd to his flock. These prophecies were all fulfilled, and God confirmed the fulfillment of them in other parts of Scripture.

Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth was 700 years before Jesus' birth. We know this time frame to be true because the Bible says Isaiah spoke his words to King Ahaz (Isaiah 7:1, 7:3, 7:10), who ruled in Judah from 742–726 BC. Isaiah's ministry continued into the reign of King Hezekiah, who ruled from 726–698 BC. We've

already learned that Judah was attacked by the Assyrians in 712 BC during the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign (Isaiah 36:1). The prophecies of Isaiah recorded in chapter 39 and following were delivered after Samaria fell to the Assyrians and when the Babylonian empire was on the rise. The prophecies from this later section of the book of Isaiah were most likely delivered around the same time since there are no clear time markers in the text. This places Isaiah's description of the Messiah's suffering and death in Isaiah 52–53 more than 700 years before it happened.

One of the most powerful confirmations of the truthfulness of Scripture comes in the fulfillment of specific prophecies made well in advance of the actual events. The foreshadowing of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection in Old Testament prophecy was a demonstration of God's sovereignty and omniscience as we recognize the precise fulfillment of these details recorded in the New Testament. God is the only one who knows the future with absolute certainty. Confidence in his sovereignty and his omniscience will lead to confidence in his Word. That confidence can lead us to humbly submit to his Word and the truths it reveals—leading to an assurance of eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

While Micah and Isaiah were looking forward to this Messiah and prophesying of him by the power of God, we are able to look back and

observe his finished work on the cross—salvation and forgiveness for all who will repent, turn from their sins, and trust in this Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Historical/Apologetics Background

As we consider the role of the prophet, we often come across the word “predict.” What comes to mind when you hear that someone made a prediction? Maybe you have made a prediction about who would win a contest or about when it would rain. What was that prediction based on? Would it be accurate to say that Micah made a prediction about the birthplace of Christ?

If we look up the word predict in Webster’s Dictionary we find: “to declare or indicate in advance; especially : foretell on the basis of observation, experience, or scientific reason.” The root of the word simply means “say before,” but the common usage today would align itself more with foretelling based on an observation or experience, like forecasting the weather.

While Micah’s statement about the birthplace of Christ was a prediction in the first sense of the definition above (declaring in advance), it cannot be explained by the second definition (“foretell on the basis of observation, experience, or scientific reason”). This is because Micah was not analyzing patterns or basing his prophecy on his personal experiences and knowledge of the Messiah. He wasn’t thinking that Jesus would probably be born in Bethlehem in Judah. No. It

was the omniscient God who cannot lie who told Micah what was going to happen. Micah was merely passing the true Word of God along. The fulfillment of what Micah said was sure, not just probable. This was not a message from a weather forecaster, but from the God who controls the weather. And this surety is true of ALL the prophecies we find in Scripture.

Be aware that many modern Bible translations use a form of the word predict when talking about the sure proclamations of God. While this is not technically wrong according to the definition above, the wording can be misleading to many hearers if it is not carefully defined and explained as a sure foretelling of God's Word and his plan.

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