

Micah 5:1-15

"O Little Town Of Bethlehem"

Allow me to remind you of that "rubber-band" pattern of prophecy so prevalent throughout Micah's message. The phrase we highlighted is called "prophetic telescoping". Meaning that it's not uncommon (we saw it last week) when studying prophecy, to have in front of you a passage that deals w/what's happening presently (that is, in the text historically) & then w/out warning the prophet will take you hundreds, maybe thousands of years down the prophetic pipeline & then suddenly snap back to their current situation or perhaps anywhere in between. & That may take place w/in the span of a single Vs or 2. God, not being bound by any *constraints* of time, seems to (on the occasion) speak w/out regard to time & He's well w/in His rights to do so...

In Micah Ch 4, he volleys back & forth between what was happening w/them, clear up to (& into) the 2nd coming of Christ & His ensuing millennial reign upon the earth. Here, in Ch 5 he will continue to do that, but now he adds into the mix the 1st coming of Christ. *Who He will be, where He will be from, what He will do, the peace He will usher in, & His purifying work both w/in His people & upon the earth...* Quite astounding when you think through the magnitude of detail that he articulates in such a concise section of scripture.

Now, last week I kind of mentioned in passing, that prophecy is the primary way that God ratifies & verifies who He is to man. I quoted Isa 46, "*Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done,*"¹

People often ask, "How do you know that you can trust the Bible? What makes it any more special than the Book of Mormon or the Koran or any other religious writing?" The short answer? This is it. There's *no other Book on the planet* that dares to stake its authenticity, its reliability upon the fact that it can always w/100% accuracy speak of what's to come as though it's history & if it ever misses you can throw the entire thing out. In the KJV of 2nd Pet Ch 1 it's referred to as the "more sure word" of prophecy.

He speaks there of his eyewitness account, whereby he saw Jesus transfigured before him on the holy Mt. – He saw Him in glory before his eyes! He heard the voice of God speaking out from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." But then he goes on to say, "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,*"² which is to say...

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 46:9–10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version, 2 Pe 1:19). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

“An even greater witness than I can provide by what I experienced personally is the even more certain word of prophecy...” God is not a man that He should lie, if He says it, He will do it. If He speaks it, He will make it good. & If you haven’t been here, I’d encourage you to download those studies later because Micah has been bringing some *radical* revelation.

Vs 1-2

We established the principle in Vs 1 last week. Though there will be a beautiful end for the nation of Israel eventually, their situation currently (as the result of their rebellion/rejection of God, His word & His ways) would be one of tribulation & pain. Assyria would come against them (& fail because God would protect them), (they would take Israel but be unable to take Judah) but about 100 yrs later Babylon would be their undoing.

“They will strike the judge of Israel w/a rod on the cheek.” – There’s a little bit of ambiguity that surrounds this statement. Some say it refers to Zedekiah (the last king of Judah) who was taken & tortured having his sons killed in front of him & then his eyes were put out... Others say it’s a clear reference to Christ who was struck on the head w/a rod & beaten in the face during His trial.

I’m not altogether sure that it’s necessary to be dogmatic on one position or the other since both are true... The Bible declares that Jesus would be beaten beyond recognition. Isaiah tells us, “So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men;”³ What that means is that when you looked at Him, He was beyond human recognition. I don’t know if you’ve ever come across an accident or something & the person was just so mangled, so bloodied, bruised & swollen that you just had to look away. That was the result of the beating that Jesus endured for you & for me. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”⁴

So, as I said. Be it Zedekiah or Jesus this is in reference to, either way it holds true. Having said that, those who hold to Zedekiah point out the contrast between Vs 1 & 2 showing how Vs 1 places Israel in the hands of their enemies & Vs 2 brings into focus their Deliverer, (& it may well be). Notice.

Vs 2

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 52:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 53:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Though there would be great humiliation in the coming captivity, a time of great exaltation would come through the One to be “Ruler in Israel” whom God would raise up from the humble birthplace of Bethlehem.

Now, you & me, we’re incredibly familiar w/the tiny town of Bethlehem. & Even in ancient Israel it was well known as the birthplace of David (Israel’s greatest king). But beyond that, you should know that Bethlehem was never an influential kind of city. Meaning, when you think of great & influential cities of the ancient world, Bethlehem just doesn’t come to mind... I mean, if you’re God & You’re going to bring Your Son into the world, where are You going to choose to do so? I would think of pomp & pageantry... perhaps the political center of the world... Rome. From Rome the word of His birth could spread rapidly! Or maybe the intellectual center of the world... Athens. People probing the depth of life’s mysteries being mesmerized by His entrance being both Deity & Humanity. Or the religious center of the world... Jerusalem. W/it’s rich spiritual heritage & deep scriptural studies, it would make sense that the Ruler of Israel would come forth from a place like Jerusalem... But Bethlehem?

Bethlehem was (& is) just a po-dunk little town about 5 miles outside of Jerusalem of virtually no great influence nor significance w/in the national or on a global scale. It’s always been, “O little town, of Bethlehem.” Even in the cities of Judah... it’s just a small, insignificant town of no rapport.

But again, it’s that principle in play that we see again & again throughout scripture. God likes to choose, likes to use, “The least of these.” Messiah would come from “humble beginnings”. Not a place of renown, of pomp or pageantry, but from a place – of humility.

The birthplace of the Messiah prophesied 700 yrs in advance. – & This is the passage that the chief priests & the scribes quoted from in Matt Ch 2 when king Herod inquired of them where the Christ was to be born...

But there are some things we need to notice here... 1st of all we note that this “Ruler” would come forth, God says, “to Me”. What that means is that the express agenda of the Messiah would be to be about *not His own will*, but He would be devoted to the will of the One who sent Him. He would be coming to do the *Father’s will*, to accomplish *His plan*. & Over & over again we find Jesus uttering words to the extent of, **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”**⁵ In Jn Ch 8 He said, “I always do those things that please Him...” Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be able to say those words? ...

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jn 6:38]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What else do we note here? That though He 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 humanity, He was fully human), but coming out of *eternity* Micah begins now to highlight His *deity*. – Jesus didn't begin to exist as a little baby lying in a manger there in Bethlehem 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!

Last week, I quoted to you from Isa Ch 9, "*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.*"⁶ The "Child born" speaks to His humanity, the "Son given" speaks to His deity. The Child was born in Bethlehem, the Son is 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.*"⁷ 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.*"⁸ Colossians tells us that He is before all things & in Him all things consist. Believe me when I tell you that time would fail us to make mention of or spend time on all the passages that point to the eternal nature of Jesus. Jesus said, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.*"⁹

Before creation existed, He was God; yet He came *into* creation, He came to His own, at the appointed time, by way of a little po-dunk, country bumpkin kind of town. Bethlehem.

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

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 90:2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 1:1-3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 8:58]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Why? What was the purpose of His coming? In the burning bush passage of Exodus Ch 3 He said, "I have seen the oppression of My people & I have come down to *deliver* them." Redemption. 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.*"¹⁰ 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.*"¹¹

Born in Bethlehem, but going forth from of old, from everlasting. We see Him numerous time s throughout the O.T. preincarnate. Often He appears as the "Angel" (which means messenger) of the LORD. We mentioned the burning bush passage, but He appeared to Hagar (Ab's maid servant) to Abraham, to Joshua, to David, He walked w/Adam & Eve in the Garden in the cool of the day.

What a wonderful revelation of the glory of Jesus being Man, yet much more than Man, He's God. What a wonderful revelation of the love of Jesus, that He would leave the glory of heaven, add humanity (eternally) to His deity that He might intercede on our behalf paying the penalty of our sin that we might (through faith in Him) be made right in the sight of God...

& Of course we can't leave this Vs w/out making mention of the fact that the word "Bethlehem" literally means, "House of Bread" & that Jesus is in fact the Bread of Life (Jn 6:35). He's the One who satisfies the deepest hunger in the heart of man.

Vs 3-5a

Micah prophesies of a time that they will be "given up" & it will seem as though the Lord is distant from them... "until the time that she is in labor has given birth." We spoke about this last week in Vs 10 of Ch 4. Israel would be "given up" times of tribulation, trouble & pain (again resulting from their rejection of God's word.)

But we also know that He (the Ruler in Israel, J.C.) came to His own & His own did not receive Him, they rejected Him, so they were given up, but not indefinitely. The time of tribulation will be turned to a time of great restoration. "The remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel." Some see partial fulfillment of this in the rebirth of the nation in 1948. I think it's ultimate fulfillment will be realized in the Great Tribulation & the glorious restoration of Israel. The Lord will seem distant until the time of restoration is upon them. Then the Lord will shepherd His flock, He will stand & feed His flock...

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

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

(Remember this is what *wasn't* happening in Micah's day. Those who ruled them weren't feeding them, they were feeding themselves *off* them, taking advantage *of* them).

But when Christ returns, He will care for them, guide them, protect them... & as He Shepherds the nation, they will have peace & security (they shall abide) because His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

& Note in Vs 5 that it says, "& This One shall *be* peace." It's not that Jesus (this Ruler from Bethlehem) simply *brings* peace; He Himself *is* peace. Paul told the Eph (2:14) He Himself is our peace.

Vs 5b-6

The idea here being that ultimately, the Ruler of Israel will destroy Israel's enemies. When he speaks of "the Assyrian" it's a euphemism (or another way to say) "the enemy" of Israel. & Though the Lord protected Judah against Assyria historically, the Assyrians certainly trampled Israel under foot & took them off into captivity.

There's also those who see, "The Assyrian" as another title for the antichrist since he represents Israel's ultimate enemy & the word here is in the singular. "The Assyrian." If that be the case then the promise here is that when the nations gather against Israel in the battle of Armageddon & the Lord fights for them, then the Lord will soundly defeat them & of course we read in Rev 19 that the antichrist along w/the false prophet will at that time be taken & cast alive into the lake of fire burning w/brimstone.

This phrase, "7 shepherds & 8 princely men" is another way of saying that God has more than enough resources & will raise up men able to defend them during that time... Regardless of how you want to interpret this, the take home is the same. Trust in the Lord, He is more than able to defend you, to fight for you, to save you.

Vs 7-9

Remember last week how that we pointed out, during the millennial reign of Christ (Vs 1-2 Ch 4) *people* would be flowing *into* Jerusalem to be hear Jesus teach personally? *Missionaries* would be flowing *out* of Jerusalem all over the world & the word of God would go forth from Jerusalem bringing blessing throughout the earth...

Here we're gleaning even more insight, after the final defeat of Israel's enemies, (Vs 7) "...*Then* the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass." The Jews will go forth into the world like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass. The picture is one of times of refreshing & renewing, Israel will be a blessing over the face of the earth...

There will be a strength & stability, an immutability to their mission & purpose (like a lion among the beasts, among flocks of sheep). In studying this I couldn't help but be reminded of what Paul shared in Rom 11 when he said of Israel, *"Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!"*¹²

Vs 10-15 (Closing)

& Thus the Lord will create purity & bring peace. That's the take home from this section. "You shall no longer worship the work of your hands." Everything that Israel had trusted in or take refuge in, the Lord will destroy. Their trust won't be in horses or chariots (military might), there will be no spiritual deception or idolatry. & Everyone who has refused to believe will be destroyed...

Like a refiner's fire having every impurity extracted from the precious metal God will remove impurities from His people & they will trust in the Lord exclusively, wholeheartedly.

Let's pray & ask the Lord to do that for us as well. That He might burn away impurities, remove any element of idolatry, that we might trust Him wholeheartedly, that our lives might bring Him glory.

Prayer Points:

Lord, we want to be holy, we desire to bring You glory. So we echo the words of Your servant, David. Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting. Have Your way in our hearts, in our lives, in this place. Pour out Your Spirit & revive us once again...

As sure as Jesus came the 1st time, He will come again. & The way to be ready for Him is to believe upon Him, to give your heart/life to Him. Turn from your sin, trust in Jesus today.

¹² *The New King James Version*, (1982). [Ro 11:12]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.