

MICAH'S PROPHECY OF MESSIAH
MATTHEW 2:1-6; MICAH 5:2

Introduction

Shortly after the birth of the Lord Jesus, Matthew records here in his Gospel account that there were certain *wise men* or *Magi* from the east who came to Jerusalem for a very specific reason. (*Matthew 2:1-2*)

These wise men were members of a priestly caste of ancient Persia and are believed to have been products of Daniel's godly and prophetic influence when he served in Babylonian and Persian empires.

The question which they asked here is the very first question that appears in the New Testament. *Matthew 2:2—"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"*

The evidence they offered as reason for their long journey was that they had seen His star in the east and that they came to worship Him.

Verse 3 records that at this news, the petty, wicked, and paranoid Roman ruler, Herod, was troubled, as was the entire city of Jerusalem!

Herod, no doubt, had put up with the nagging of the Jewish religious leaders of his day, coming before him on behalf of the Jews and their religious requests. So now he had no problem with demanding something of them! (*Verse 4*)

The chief priests and the scribes then called the attention of Herod to a small passage in the prophets, from the pen of an almost forgotten contemporary of Isaiah—Micah the prophet from Moresheth in Gath had written this some seven centuries before of the birthplace of One Who was to be Ruler in Israel. (*Verse 5-6*)

When we consider that these were supposed to be the leaders of the religious life and thought of the nation, it truly is sad that they had no further interest other than to answer King Herod's question!

The Ruler was to be born in Bethlehem but what was that to them? The king might be interested.

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These Persian priests might want to journey to see Him and worship Him. But what did that matter to them? They went back to their long prayers in public to be seen of men. They went back to their phylacteries.

They were like many religious leaders of our day! They held prophetic truth but they did not allow prophetic truth to hold them. They searched the Scriptures upon request but they did not allow the Scriptures to search them!

Let's move to *Micah 5:2*:

I. WE SEE GOD'S PROPHETIC PREVIEW!

The prophet Micah lived in the stirring days of the end of the northern kingdom.

Four kings of the northern kingdom of Israel lived in Micah's time. Three kings of the southern kingdom of Judah reigned during his lifetime.

As one godless king after another reigned in the north, he saw its apostasy deepen and plunge the whole kingdom in death-throws and finally into the Assyrian captivity.

At any rate, to this humble prophet, God sent this piece of prophecy relating to the birthplace of a Ruler whose kingdom would not disappear.

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

Bethlehem means "house of bread." *Ephratah* means "fruitful." It was well named. The slopes surrounding Bethlehem abounded with figs, vines, almonds and olives. It was indeed a fruitful land! But, out of this "house of bread" was to come *the Bread of Life*. This naturally fruitful place was to become the birthplace of the One who would make *spiritual fruitfulness* possible.

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Bethlehem in Micah's day was considered relatively unimportant. It was *"little among the thousands of Judah."*

Bethlehem was not without its history:

The first mention of this place is in *Genesis 35:16, 19*, showing it to be the place where Jacob was just outside of when his wife, **Rachel, died as she gave birth to Benjamin there! And she was buried there just outside of Bethlehem!**

David remembered the water in the well of Bethlehem!

2 Samuel 23:14-16 14 And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. 15 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. 16 And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD."

The families of the royal tribe were numbered but when it came to Bethlehem with its small population, it was necessary to reckon it with others. It was a village that was despised because it was small! It is easy to despise small things!

The prophet Zechariah asked this question in Zechariah 4:10, *"For who hath despised the day of small things?"*

But God has seen fit to take that which was small and that which was despised, like Bethlehem, and made it superabound to His glory!

1 Corinthians 1:28—"And the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

God has followed this course of action in order *"that no flesh may glory in His presence"* *1 Corinthians 1:29* says!

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Men try to set their own standards of the way they think things should be! And when their own standards are not met others, they reject them wholesale!

In the case of Christ, the Pharisees rejected Him as a prophet on the ground that He came from Galilee. In John 7:52 they said, *"Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."*

That settled it for them! But, had they taken time to search, they might have discovered that prophets HAD indeed arisen out of Galilee! Jonah was from Gath-hepher in Galilee! Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and perhaps even Nahum were of Galilee!

Bethlehem might be, from the viewpoint of those of Micah's day and afterward, deemed worthy of no importance in the sight of men.

However, in the sight of God, this little and insignificant village was to become the birthplace of the Messiah.

WE SEE GOD'S PROPHETIC PREVIEW...

II. WE SEE GOD'S PROMISED PROGRAM!

"Yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

The prophet combines both the first coming and the second coming of the Messiah in these words.

In the incarnation, the Lord Jesus Christ became in the *"likeness of sinful flesh"* (*Rom. 8:3*) in order to accomplish certain specific things:

A. Jesus Christ Appeared In The Flesh To Reveal God To Men!

God was incomprehensible to the terms of human understanding until the Lord Jesus Christ revealed Him.

John 1: 18 says, *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only*

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begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

Men have often wondered what God is like. The answer is that **God is exactly like Christ!** The writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 1:3, says that the Son of God, Jesus, is *"the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person..."*

In reality, there is no other God than the God Who has been revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ!

1. God's purity and holiness is seen in Christ!

1 Peter 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Three times Pilate said, *"I find no fault in Him."*

In John 8:46, Jesus asked His critics this question, *"Which of you convinceth me of sin?"*

**2. God's righteousness is seen in Christ!
(Romans 3:21-26)**

3. God's grace and truth is seen in Christ!

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

4. God's compassion and love is seen in Christ!

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**5. God's hatred for sin is seen in Christ!
(Isaiah 53:4-6)**

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Jesus Christ Appeared In The Flesh To Reveal God To Men

B. Jesus Christ Appeared In The Flesh To Reveal God's Ideal Man!

Jesus Christ, who was miraculously born of a virgin, BOTH WAS AND IS GOD'S IDEAL MAN! The first man, Adam, brought sin and death into the world! And all of mankind after that first Adam, has been born with that same sinful image of Adam—because of being IN ADAM! That is, **all of mankind except ONE!**

There has been only ONE BIRTH in which the Child WAS NOT BORN IN ADAM! Through the miracle of the Virgin Birth, God provided the second Adam, Jesus Christ, Who WAS AND IS His only begotten Son! HIS SON came as God's ideal man...to provide the ONE AND ONLY sufficient sacrifice for the salvation of sinful men!

Understand that to the unbeliever, Christ is only an example of God's ideal man in that the righteousness of Christ's sinless life magnifies the sin and unrighteousness of unredeemed man!

What men did to God's son, the only perfectly righteous Man ever, shows the exceeding sinfulness of man!

But listen, the unredeemed cannot hope to follow the example of Christ's life because of the exceeding sinfulness of sin in His own life because of that first Adam in the Garden of Eden!

Man must look past Himself and any and all others to Christ's righteous provision on the Cross for him to have any hope whatsoever!

And, when we are born again by the Spirit of God by placing our faith and trust in Christ's provision on the Cross of Calvary, then as Believers, Christ is our example of how to live!

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He is the example to believers in the manner in which suffering and persecution are to be endured. The Apostle Peter wrote in *1 Peter 2:21*—"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps!"

God never intended for sinful man to attempt to follow Christ as his example for salvation! To do so would be a futile attempt to merely reform and change man, which by the way, IS NOT POSSIBLE! God is seeking the salvation of man, not the reformation of man!

*Jesus Christ Appeared In The Flesh To Reveal God To Men
Jesus Christ Appeared In The Flesh To Reveal Man!*

But there is a third reason for the incarnation of the Lord Jesus.

C. Jesus Christ Appeared In The Flesh To Become The Sacrifice For Sin!

The incarnation was necessary in order to provide the Lord Jesus with a body in which He could become a sacrifice for sin!

The writer of Hebrews cited Psalm 40 to show this point:
Hebrews 10:5-6— 5 "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure"

Sin was never taken away by the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. It was impossible that sins should be taken away by the substitutionary sacrifice of animals!

Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

So, the Lord Jesus came into the world in order that He might be the one, true acceptable sacrifice!

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Hebrews 9:26—"...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

If a true perspective is to be reached, the relation of the incarnation to the Cross cannot be overlooked!

The Babe came to Bethlehem's manger so that the same Man might go to Calvary's cross! This is the grand truth that was suggested, though perhaps not comprehended at the time, when Simeon first saw the baby Jesus in the temple!

He said at the time as recorded in *Luke 2:29-30*—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

God's promised program announced by Micah in the words "*Yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel*" contains a second reference.

It refers, as already shown, to the first coming of the Lord Jesus. **But it refers also to His Second Coming!**

The coming One announced by Micah was "*to be ruler in Israel.*" This portion of the verse has not yet been fulfilled! But it will be! Christ has come in the incarnation but He has not yet come forth as the Ruler in Israel!

That aspect of His coming awaits His second coming! In ***Luke 1:30-32***, the angel first announced some things that were fulfilled in Christ's first coming!

Mary conceived in her womb!

She brought forth a Son!

She called His name Jesus!

He shall be great!

He shall be called the Son of the Highest!

But, then the angel announced some things that are yet to be fulfilled! (Look at *Luke 1:32b-33*)

"The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David;..."

"And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever..."

"...and of His kingdom there shall be no end"

The Lord Jesus Christ is yet to physically reign over this earth as Sovereign.

The Psalmist describes this time with these words found in *Psalm 22:27-28*, *"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the governor among the nations"*

When the Lord Jesus Christ takes over the rulership of the earth, true world peace will be ushered in! The angels spoke of this condition when they announced to the shepherds long ago, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"* (*Luke 2:14*).

Isaiah announced the results to be obtained by the reign of Christ in the opening verses of Isaiah Chapter 11.

In verse 9 of that Chapter the LORD states: *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"*

WE SEE GOD'S PROPHETIC PREVIEW...PROMISED PROGRAM!

III. WE SEE GOD'S PROFOUND PERSON!

The prophet Micah concludes his majestic prediction of the birthplace of the coming Ruler in Israel with the words, *"Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

Here is a fathomless but awesome truth!

The announcement that the Ruler is to be *"from everlasting"*, undeniably speaks of His divine nature!

This Ruler is to be a divine person! In grace, He became a Babe in Bethlehem. He was, nevertheless, Jehovah the true God of Israel!

In Isaiah 9:6, He is called *"The mighty God"*! His **origin** is not to be identified with His appearances to the patriarchs of old.

The expression, *"Whose goings forth have been of old"* refers to **His former appearances** but **His origin** is *"from everlasting."* He was before the world was! He is not the result of creation!

The Lord Jesus stated, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am"* (*John 8:58*). Abraham furnishes as good an illustration as any of the appearances of the Ruler in his *"goings forth...of old."*

In Genesis 18, Jehovah (the angel of the LORD), together with two angels (cf. 18:1-2, 22; 19:1), appeared to Abraham. There are two scenes in the chapter. In the first scene, the angel of the LORD, gives a repetition of the promise made earlier to Abraham regarding the seed God promised him. The second scene is that of Abraham's prayer of intercession for Sodom.

Throughout the entire chapter, the record is that of a divine person dealing with Abraham! Since John 1:18 reminds us that, *"No man hath seen God at any time,"* it follows that the divine person with whom Abraham dealt was none other than the Lord Jesus, the "Ruler" of Micah chapter five.

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A second illustration of the same truth is found in Genesis 22. The scene is that of the worship of Abraham in offering up Isaac. In verses 11 and 12, we have the appearance of *"the angel of the LORD"* who can be none else than the Ruler in his *"goings forth...of old."*

The Word of God does not leave us without evidence that the Ruler is also *"from everlasting"* which means *"from the days of eternity"*. Both the Old and the New Testament bear testimony to this truth!

In *Proverbs 8:22- 23*, *"The LORD (Jehovah) possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was."*

John 1:14 speaks of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us!

In verses 1-2 of John 1, John had written, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God"*.

The Ruler who was to be born in Bethlehem is the One Who was *"from everlasting."*

This prophecy given through Micah covered a boatload of truth beyond anything the religious leaders of Herod's time could have imagined!

It was the product of inspiration. Bethlehem's Babe was from eternity! And He will yet reign in this world! But right now He wants to reign in your heart!

Conclusion

Does He reign in your heart and life? If not my friend let me tell you that you need Him desperately! **Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh to reveal God to men, to reveal God's ideal man, and to become the sacrifice for sin!**