

“Bethlehem”
Micah 5
(Preached at Trinity, January 29, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The history of Israel is a history of failure, of covenant unfaithfulness and idolatry. It bears testimony to the sinful condition of the human heart.
 - A. As we went through the Book of Judges we saw Israel without a king.
Judges 21:25 NAU - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
The Book of Judges has a theme of failure and deliverance. Israel would fall into rebellious sin; God would judge them by raising up an adversary who would afflict them. They would repent and cry out to God and God would send a judge who deliverer them, but they would soon fall into sin again and the process would repeat.
The author of Judges seems to imply Israel's problem was they didn't have a king. Everyone did their own thing.
 - B. Then I preached through 1 & 2 Samuel and we saw that Israel demanded a king like the other nations. Could that solve the problem of the sinful rebellion repeated over and over in the Judges? The answer, of course, is no.
 - a. Their request was a rejection of God's rule, but God granted their request.
 - b. Israel's kings suffered the same sin problem as the rest of Israel.
No earthly king will ever rule perfectly.
 - C. God promised King David that his throne would be an everlasting reign. This promise would be fulfilled, not through David's sons, but through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - D. Israel continued in idolatry and wickedness until God's judgment came raining down. The 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom were destroyed and Judah was sent into a 70 year exile in Babylon.
This is how 2 Kings ended.
2. Micah preached during the reign of Hezekiah and bore testimony to Israel's wickedness and God's judgment.
Micah 1:2-5 NAU - "Hear, O peoples, all of you; Listen, O earth and all it contains, And let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple. ³ For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. ⁴ The mountains will melt under Him And the valleys will be split, Like wax before the fire, Like water poured down a steep place. ⁵ All this is for the rebellion of Jacob And for the sins of the house of Israel."

3. But along with God's judgment, Micah also announced God's mercy. Micah prophesies of God's glorious restoration through the Gospel. In **Chapter 4** we read:
Micah 4:1-2 NAU - "And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. ² Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
4. Micah continues this Judgment/Mercy paradigm in **Chapter 5**.
- A. **Chapter 5** opens with another affirmation of God's judgment upon Israel, Jerusalem in particular. They are surrounded. A siege wall is formed against them.
- B. The "rod" is an instrument of correction.
Micah 5:1 NAU - "With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek."
- C. But there is a sudden shift in **Verse 2**. It opens, "But as for you . . ."
 The word "but" sometimes paves the way for a transforming shift in a passage. For example, in Ephesians 2 Paul writes of the devastating impact of sin but then writes: **Ephesians 2:4-5 NAU** - "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)"
- I. The place of deliverance
- A. Micah tells of a city. A small country city. A city of little political or military significance.
Micah 5:2 NAU - "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.*"
1. Micah prophesies that something significant was going to take place in this insignificant city. A new ruler would be born in that city.
 2. Bethlehem was located about 6 miles to the south of Jerusalem. In ancient days it was called Ephrath or Ephrathah. The name *Bethlehem* means "The House of Bread."
- B. Bethlehem had a long history. The place, Bethlehem occurs 49 times in the Bible.
1. It was of the Tribe of Judah but was so small and insignificant it wasn't even named among the more than 100 cities listed in Joshua 15 as being a part of the inheritance of Judah.
 2. It was here that Jacob buried Rachel.
 3. It was here that Ruth had lived when she married Boaz and the place where they gave birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David. Luke calls Bethlehem, "the City of David."
Luke 2:4 NAU - "Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,"

4. Micah is saying that Bethlehem would be the birth place of the Messiah. It was the fulfillment of God's promise to David.

II. The Person of deliverance

- A. Micah describes God sending forth the Messiah:

"One will come forth for Me . . ."

 1. Jesus was the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose. The full revelation of God's covenant promises.
 2. Paul described the birth of Christ as the fulfillment of God's purpose.

Galatians 4:4-5 NAU - "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."
- B. Micah gives the focus or purpose of the sending of the Messiah:

"One will come forth for Me . . ."

 1. Why did God determine to send forth the Messiah, Jesus Christ?

God did it for Himself, for His good pleasure.

Ephesians 1:5 NAU - "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,"

Ephesians 1:11-12 NAU - "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory."
 2. God does all things for Himself. All of creation is a display of His glory, a display of His divine excellence.

In **Romans 9** Paul reminds us that the whole Egyptian drama was for the purpose of displaying God's glory.

Romans 9:17 NAU - "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."
- C. In sending the Messiah God was going to start over at David's birthplace for the birth of the King of kings.
 1. When Herod enquired as to the birthplace of the King this is the text that was used.

Matthew 2:1-6 NAU - "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." ³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ⁶ 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

2. David was born in Bethlehem and Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but Jesus came forth from eternity.
Micah 5:2 NAU - "His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."
John 1:1-2 NAU - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God."
John 8:56-58 NAU - "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad." ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

III. The people delivered

- A. First, there was an abandonment – God’s judgment upon their sin
 1. **Verse 3** links **Verses 1 & 2** together. In **Verse 2** God promises the restoration, He promises to send the Messiah to be born in the City of David. But before that promise would be fulfilled Israel would experience the abandonment of **Verse 3**.
Micah 5:3 NAU - "Therefore He will give them *up* until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel."
 2. This is the message of God’s redemptive purpose. It is a message of God’s judgment upon sin, but also of His mercy upon His elect people.
- B. Notice the abandonment was not erased until the advent of the Messiah
Micah 5:3 NAU - "until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child."
 1. This is referring to the birth of Christ – when the one in labor gave birth.
 2. With the birth of Christ, God’s Redeemer entered to restore His people.
Matthew 1:21 NAU - "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
 3. The fulfilment of God’s Covenant of Redemption find’s its fulfillment in Christ.
Micah 5:3-4 NAU - "Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel. ⁴ And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth."
 4. The Messiah is Lord and King, the provider and protector of His people.
Micah 5:4 NAU - "And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth."
- C. **Verses 5-15** describe the Messiah’s Kingdom
 1. Assyria was the force of Micah’s generation, the power threatening the peace of Jerusalem. They were a powerful foe, but no match for God.
2 Kings 19:34 NAU - "For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake."
 2. Assyria stood as an example of all who would threaten the people of God. God’s people will prevail.
Micah 5:9 NAU - "Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, And all your enemies will be cut off."

Conclusion:

1. Micah's prophecy about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem is his best known prophecy. We sing, "O little town of Bethlehem" at Christmas.
We know of Mary and Joseph making their journey to Bethlehem because of the census.
2. It's easy to miss an important element of significance. This one of many prophecies fulfilled by Christ.
Alfred Edersheim found 456 Old Testament verses referring to the Messiah.
3. The details that led to Jesus being born in Bethlehem were significant, and yet it took place just as Micah foretold over 700 years before.
God has fulfilled His redemptive purpose.