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Our Glorious Redemption

Micah 5:1-6, "Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. "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." 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. 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. This One will be *our* peace.

When the Assyrian invades our land, When he tramples on our citadels, Then we will raise against him Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men. They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, The land of Nimrod at its entrances; And He will deliver *us* from the Assyrian When he attacks our land And when he tramples our territory.

Micah 5 flows from that which comes before in Micah 4:9-13. Notice that an “evil day” (cf. Micah 2:3) is prophesied for the people of God.

Micah 4:10, “Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth, for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field, and go to Babylon...”

And sadly their leaders and kings will most certainly let them down.

Micah 4:9, “Now, why do you cry out loudly? Is there no king among you, or has your counselor perished...”

It is going to be a time of intense pressure and turmoil.

Micah 4:11, “And now many nations have been assembled against you...”

Yet this is not the end, but a glorious segway in God’s plan for His people.

Micah 4:12, “But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, and they do not understand His purpose...”

Truly, God is going to take this dispossessed, weak, hurting people and raise them up unto great triumph. They will be a mighty Kingdom which will overcome and so conquer all the kingdoms of the world.

Micah 4:13, “Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion, for your horn [referring to their strength as a kingdom] I will make iron and your hoofs I will make bronze, that you may pulverize many peoples...”

Such is the message of Micah 4. And such are two of the main themes which we’ve already seen in Micah.

1. Our health and wealth gospel revolves around the coming of the Kingdom of God. Much of the promises in Scripture involving success, prosperity, health, and the like find their fulfillment when Christ comes back to the earth in His glory!
2. An inconvenient truth and the reality that there are times when God ordains a bitter providence for His people in the here and now. The genuine child of God living in the time of Micah had entered into “an evil time” NOT because of anything they had done. They were going to suffer along-side their wicked countrymen!

These two elements culminate in Micah 5!

Yet this inconvenient truth was not and is not the final word for God’s people. It has and can be a reality for us in this state of sin and misery, yet it is not the full story. In fact, if anything, it provides the context out of which God brings forth His and our glorious redemption. This is the third theme we are going to discuss from this book. What is this glorious redemption? How does God bring it to pass? And with whom does He do it? The answer is found in an earthly King whom God would raise up to deliver His people.

A Convergence in God's Eternal Plan

God has an eternal plan which began before the world began and will continue way beyond this age. God, "...chose us in Him before the foundation of the world..." (Ephesians 1:4) clearly before creation. God divined a plan of redemption whereby He would deliver you from sin! This plan is described as God's "...eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:11).

This is amazing! All that is taking place in this world is NOT by chance. It is according to the eternal plan of God which He conceived before the world began! And this plan/eternal purpose involves a "convergence" in the person and work of Christ, our Redeemer.

Convergence is a compound of two words: *con* which means *with* and *verge* which refers to a *coming together*. A *convergence* occurs when multiple paths come together. Think of 200 different railroad tracks crisscrossing America. Imagine them all coming together at a single point. We would call that point a *convergence* when it came to the railroad. In science fiction, it is where parallel universes collide. Such a convergence was part of God's Redemptive plan, and it all revolves around the person and work of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:20, "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world..."

Yet with Christ it is different. For Scripture indicates that redemptive history/world history converged in Christ. Christ told the Jews of His day this:

John 5:39, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me."

Everything in the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi, is about Christ!

2 Corinthians 1:20, "For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes..."

That means every promise ever made by God is realized or made possible in Christ! Paul described the ceremonial law this way:

Colossians 2:17, "...a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."

The ceremonial laws relating to the worship of God in the Old Testament all had but one thing in mind, Jesus Christ!

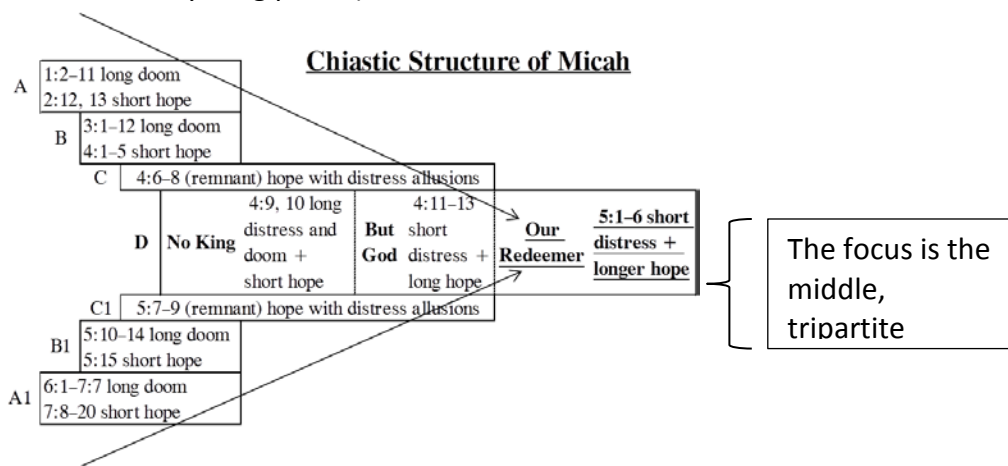
Galatians 4:4-5a, "...when the fullness of the time came [the idea behind this expression is that historically, politically, religiously there couldn't have been a better time for Christ to come to this world; God had readied the world for Jesus! Do you see? There is a convergence here...], God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law..."

Christ is the focal point of all history, secular or sacred! Thus we are not surprised at Paul's argument in Romans 11.

Romans 11:36, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.”

Everything in this world either has led to Christ or flows from Christ, from the rebellion of the atheist to the king who sits on a throne in Africa, from Him and through Him and to Him are all things! And such was the conviction of Micah when he penned this prophesy. Of all the prophets, Micah is perhaps the most difficult one to outline (the prophesy is like the epistle of James whose flow seems more akin to “thought association” than anything else).

However, there is a pattern to this book which converges at Micah 5:1-6. Notice the outline which I took from Leslie Allan (NICOT). The structure of the prophesy of Micah is ordered around a Chiasm (where the focus is on the middle to which everything points)...



Allan observed that this entire prophesy was written to highlight and so draw the focus of the people of God to the Redeemer and so the Redemption which God in time would provide. As he put it this way: “This [Mic. 5:1-56] is indeed the center and pinnacle of the whole book...” (Allen, 1994, p. 260) Truly, this Redeemer not only is the focus of this prophesy, but according to Micah, He has been the focus from eternity.

Micah 5:2b, “...His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

God planned to send Christ before time began! He truly is the focus of God’s eternal purpose! From this we conclude that whatever else we might glean from Micah, the prophet wants us to see that it is all housed in the person and work of Christ. And so, yes, there is the inconvenient truth that sometimes God ordains a bitter providence, “the evil day” (Micah 2:3). And at these times it is God’s will that our hope remains fixed “not on the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen” (2 Corinthians 4:18), the coming Kingdom of God such that we do not despair, repine, or complain. Yet on what basis can we have such a hope? Micah gives us the answer; it is housed in our glorious redemption and Mighty Redeemer.

Context of God's Redeeming Work

Micah 5:1a, "Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; they have laid siege against us..."

The focus of this prophecy revolves around the attack of the Assyrian's on Judah and Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Recall, that the Northern Kingdom of Israel has been taken into exile ultimately on account of Ahaz's appeal to the Assyrians for help (2 Kings 16:7-9). This appeal made Judah a vassal state such that heavy tribute was required to be paid to the Assyrians on a yearly basis in exchange for their protection. In 705 B.C. Sargon II of Assyria died and Sennacherib his son became king. Hezekiah took advantage of the transition (which usually was accompanied by national turmoil) and so simply stopped sending tribute to Assyria (2 Kings 18:14). This eventually led to Sennacherib marching on Judah in 701 BC. And this is the setting of Micah 5 where Micah mentions Judah's foe by name.

Micah 5:5b, "When the Assyrian invades our land, when he tramples on our citadels..."

Now you might think that because Hezekiah was on the throne (he was a man of God) and Isaiah was his counselor, the threat posed by Sennacherib wouldn't have seemed that bad. Yet you'd be wrong.

Micah 5:1b, "...with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel [Hezekiah] on the cheek."

Though Hezekiah was a man of God, nevertheless he was a sinner. Accordingly, as Sennacherib approached Jerusalem to lay it in siege Hezekiah waivered in his faith! This no doubt is why Micah said this in Micah 4.

Micah 4:9, "Now, why do you cry out loudly? Is there no king among you, or has your counselor perished, that agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?"

See rather than trusting God alone, Hezekiah endeavored to bribe Sennacherib in order to stop his approach (cf. 2 Kings 18:14-16).¹ Not surprisingly, Sennacherib was all too willing to take Hezekiah's money and so demanded a huge settlement from Judah. In order to pay it, Hezekiah used the gold with which he had paneled the doors of the Lord's house! Yet Sennacherib was intent on humbling Judah. Accordingly, he received the bribe, placed it in his treasury, and continued his march toward Jerusalem! And yet, this was of the Lord, for according to Micah, it was God's intent to deliver His people up to fear, worry, distrust, and much, much more.

Micah 5:3a, "Therefore, He [God] will give them *up* until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child..."

From all of this we see the context in which Micah announced the coming of the Messiah/Redeemer. It was NOT one of glory, splendor, and majesty (as you might expect when a proclamation of this magnitude is given), BUT one of great humiliation and despair! Now think with me here, we know that the Messiah did not come in 701 B.C. when Judah was threatened by Sennacherib. So, what do we do with the promise of Micah 5:2? Micah makes it sound as though God's Redeemer/King would arise at this time!

First one must recognize that objects when seen at a distance can appear as if they are together when in fact they are not. And so it is often in Biblical prophecy where two events separated by great distances

are announced as one. Thus as Micah viewed the coming of the Redeemer in the context of trial and difficulty we conclude that in Micah's view the ground from which the Messiah would arise and so come to His people is one of humiliation, difficulty, and despair. This was the teaching of Micah, such was the case in 4 BC when Christ was born and such is the case when a person comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ!

The context of God's redeeming work is always one of humility and weakness! That is the inconvenient truth which Micah here re-emphasizes!² And so if God is going to mature you in the faith, if He is going to bring you to the point where we trust only Christ, He will begin by showing you the folly of man-trust and self-trust! And this ought not to surprise us, for the cradle out of which the Redeemer would arise, is one of insignificance.

Micah 5:2, "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 ..."

Of all the clans of the tribe of Judah, the Ephrathite clan around Bethlehem could hardly supply a respectable army unit during times of tribal levy. The city was an afterthought just outside of Jerusalem. Today it has been enveloped by the city of Jerusalem. In Micah's day it was separate and nothing more than a blip on one's journey to the capital city. And so, as is His redemption, so is God's Redeemer: this "ruler" would arise out of the most insignificant place! And yet the theme of insignificance is not exhausted. Notice the people from which the Redeemer would come.

Micah 5:3, "Therefore, He will give them *up* until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child..."

Who is the "she" of this passage from which the "ruler" would come? Notice it is not so much a person as it is a people. Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we turn to the book of Revelation which you will see this passage directly alludes to Micah.

Revelation 14:3-6, 13, 17: "And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads *were* seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. [Obviously what is being described here is Satan and his rebellion against God in which 1/3 of the host of heaven followed him (cf. v. 9)...] And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth [as you will see, this is not Mary, but the covenant people of God...], so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron [this has clear allusion to Mic. 5]; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne [this is in reference to Christ's ascension]. And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days...¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*. [Yet, God has and continues to protect the woman such that Satan's continued and perennial attack is the body of Christ in part or in whole...]¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

From this passage we understand what Micah is saying; the Redeemer, who would "rule" the people of God like no other king could, would come not only from an insignificant city but also from the most

insignificant people imaginable, the covenant people of God which Micah describes in Micah 4 where he speaks of the final age which began with Christ and will end when He returns.

Micah 4:6-7, “‘In that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will assemble the lame, and gather the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcasts a strong nation, and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever.’”

“Bethlehem Ephrathah” and “the woman” shows us humility and insignificance. From this unlikely people and place, God would bring forth a Ruler- a world conqueror! It is from this backdrop that God brings forth His redeeming grace. So if this day you are...

- Down-trodden or distressed!
- Ever mindful of your weakness!
- One who has encountered a difficult go of it- a bitter providence.

...you are a candidate with which God can work His redeeming grace!

We need to hear this! We avoid bitterness and trial so much that when it comes we resent it and the Lord for ordaining it. This passage ought to minister to our souls! When you are at your worst, lift your head and behold the Savior, He will be at His best! That essentially is the exhortation of Micah here. To a people facing “an evil day,” they must raise their eyes in anticipation... for God’s eternal plan has just begun!

The Practical Consequences of God’s Redemption in our Lives

Throughout the following description, keep in mind the inconvenient truth that was before Micah’s hearers as he wrote this! Yes, bitterness lay before them, but He who is with them would by no means let them down.

Micah 5:3b, “Therefore, He will give them *up* [this is speaking about the people of God being given up to “an evil time”] 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.”

The first fruit that would accompany the coming of the Redeemer is that He would be a “uniter!” The splintered, divided people of God would be one in Christ. Now in Micah’s day, no doubt most would have understood this to be a statement regarding the people of Israel and the people of Judah (who divided in 931 B.C.). Yet from the commentary that God gives in the New Testament, we understand this uniting-work also to include the Gentile!

Ephesians 2:13-14a, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off [the Gentiles] have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups* [Jew and Gentile] *into* one...”

In fact it was based on this “peace” that Christ gave to His people as a gift that Paul exhorted.

Ephesians 4:3, "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

That is the first blessing mentioned here by Micah! Yes, the inconvenient truth is that all of us at times are going to run into difficulty and hardship in life yet the blessing is that we have each other!

Micah 5:4, "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."

Do you know who your shepherd is? It is NOT an elder or a preacher. It ultimately is NOT a husband or a parent. Ultimately, it is the Lord Jesus Christ! Everyone else is simply an under-shepherd. From this we see a second benefit that comes from our Redeemer; the promise to Shepherd us and so strengthen, protect, secure, and so establish us. In fact, notice the emphasis here, "...And they will remain!" It is NOT so much on His tender care (although that most certainly is a part of it), BUT His sovereign power which will maintain us, His body, and so our faith in and through all things!

Recently a brother shared the status of his walk and asked this: "Do I sound like I am apostatizing to you?"

Of course anyone who asked that question, the answer is that all of us in Christ are in varying degrees of wandering away; we're sheep! But the good news is that what holds us is not our effort, good intentions, or discipline, but the Lord Himself! We must rely upon this!

The presence of Christ in our lives brings with it the promise that because Christ is our shepherd, we will "remain" and "no one will snatch us out of the Father's hand!"³ So when you think of the Redeeming work of Christ, you must think of His power to uphold you and so preserve you in and through all things! What a comfort this is when facing the inconvenient truth! we saw last week!

Micah 5:5a, "And this One will be *our* peace..."

While impulse would have us take this in reference to our relationship with God (cf. Romans 5:1), the context involves the cessation of the conflict which is part and parcel of this fallen world. Accordingly, we take this as a "peace" involving the cessation of war. This will be ours in the New Heavens and the New Earth. There we will not be ravished by Assyrians, Babylonians, boogey men, or bad guys! Our conflict with sin which involves not only our moral struggle with it (holiness), but the devastating effects of sin in one's body which brings about pain, suffering, and death, will be conquered. This and more is in mind when Micah describes the third blessing that would come to God's people on account of the Redeemer; Peace!

When we are confronted by an Inconvenient Truth involving personal suffering on account of this state of sin and misery, be encouraged. God has not nor will He leave you to struggle in your conflict. Christ is our peace such that we look to the glorious time when His peace is manifested in our lives.

Revelation 21:4, "...He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Notice a fourth blessing.

Micah 5:5b-6a, “When the Assyrian invades our land, when he tramples on our citadels, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men. And they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod [Babylon] at its entrances...”

The focus of this benefit revolves around undershepherds whom God engifts and appoints to minister to us. According to Ephesians 4, one of the more important gifts that Christ as our Redeemer gives to His church is servant/leaders who are called to “shepherd the church of God entrusted to their care.” By way of note, this also would involve the shepherding call of the husband toward his wife and parents toward their children.

Now speaking of this “shepherding” activity, the emphasis in Micah is a little different than what most of us normally think. Notice the statement, “And they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword...” Though not often stressed in our day, nevertheless an aspect of shepherding is fighting on behalf of others and so protecting them from harm. This is a very important facet of pastoral care which is why this is emphasized in Scripture. Paul speaking of the shepherding activity of the elder wrote this:

Titus 1:9b-11, “...he [must] be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach*, for the sake of sordid gain.”

Ezekiel rebuked all in a position of oversight and care; notice the issue speaking of the flock (whether it be a wife, a child, or the church):

Ezekiel 34:5-6, “And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill, and My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth; and there was no one to search or seek *for* them.”

This is a fourth benefit by which God intends to uphold His people when facing “an evil day.” God gives undershepherds (which is everyone to somebody else) to encourage the body unto the work of service!

Micah 5:6b, “...and He will deliver *us* from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory.”

This is the final benefit mentioned of the Shepherd in this passage; deliverance. This once again points our minds and focus to the coming Kingdom! For ultimately, the Second Coming of Christ is the deliverance referenced here! James Montgomery Boice was known for this comment prior to his death concerning Psalm 103 which says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases.”...

This passage is true. When in life we are crippled by sickness and yet recover, we give God the glory who ‘healed our disease.’ But if the sickness is terminal and we die, in heaven we will give God the glory who ‘healed our disease!’

This promise is ours in Christ!

Let us reflect upon the application a brief moment. All that we have seen ought both to comfort us as we reflect upon the inconvenient truth presented in Micah as well as to challenge us. It ought to comfort us in that we know that God knows that what we are going through at times is hard. That is why He has given us these wonderful blessings in Christ. He will by all means see us through! However, it also to challenge us for each one of the benefits referenced here involves the child of God being Christ's hands, feet, eyes, and mouth. He is our "peace," we must labor to maintain the peace of Christ in the bond of love. He is our "comfort," we must be willing to be used by God to "comfort those who are in distress with the comfort with which we have been comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)!

End Notes

¹ No matter how much Hezekiah trusted the Lord, he nevertheless remained a frail man of this world. As Peter after him (cf. Mt. 14:30), Hezekiah took his eyes off the Lord and placed them on the waves of the tribulation which surrounded.

² It is as Paul put it in Rom. 3:22-23: "All... being justified as a free gift... who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!" When we considered this passage in our discussion of Rom. 3 we saw that the Redeeming work of God is always done in a crucible, at the point of struggle and even despair.

³ As such, David spoke of this in his Shepherd's Psalm, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me..." (Ps. 23:4a). See, because his sovereign Shepherd was with him, David did not fear being lost, taken, or destroyed. God most certainly would protect him. We see it in Jn. 10:27-28 where Christ said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

Sources Cited

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About the Preacher

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