

ADVENT 2018

Part 4: “Born of Bethlehem”

Micah 5:1-5a

By David A. Ritchie

Sunday, December 23, 2018 (Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Scripture Reading

- 5** Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops;
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel
on the cheek.
- 2** But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.
- 3** Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.
- 4** And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.
- 5** And he shall be their peace.¹

Introduction

King Herod was a self-obsessed and paranoid man. He ruled in Jerusalem, and he wanted desperately to be seen as God’s anointed king. He rebuilt the temple that had once been destroyed and built many other monuments so that his name would not be forgotten. But he was so concerned about his own power that he even murdered members of his own family to retain that power. Why? Deep down he knew he was a fake. He was an imposter king.

He wasn’t an Israelite. He was an Edomite. He wasn’t a real king. He was essentially nothing more than a puppet king of Caesar in Rome.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mic 5:1–5.

So you can imagine the joy he felt when he heard that magi or wise men from the East had come into his royal court that they might give gifts and honor the king of the Jews. Then, you can imagine the immediate insecurity he would have felt when these magi said that God's anointed king had been born and that it was not Herod.

In response, Herod had his best biblical scholars search the ancient prophecies to determine where the real anointed king – known as the Messiah – was to be born. Those scholars poured through the ancient prophecies until they came to Micah 5, the very passage that we read today.

And what was discovered filled King Herod's heart with fear and murderous rage. The Messiah was to be **"Born of Bethlehem."** But often times, that is all this text is known for: as if all this text were only a prophetic prediction of where the Messiah was to be born, and nothing more. Today, I want to show you that there is so much more to this passage; that it is a passage teeming with the hope of Advent. *More than predicting where this king will be born, this is a passage about who this king is promised to be.* So with that in mind, I want to show you five truths from the Prophet Micah's vision about God's anointed king; five truths that filled Herod's heart with fear, but that should fill our hearts with hope.

Exposition

1.) The Future King.

***"Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek"* (Micah 5:1, ESV).**

- Micah's context: the twilight of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.
- Jerusalem was falling.
- The House of David had failed.
- Micah is confronting the failure of the kingdom of man.

- Toward the end, there was this perpetual temptation for God's people to put their trust in their king, their army, their political alliances.
- Micah is saying to them and to us, "The kingdoms of this world will fail you."
- Politics at best are a flawed coping mechanism to try to bring order into the chaos of a world broken with sin.
- At best politics can mitigate the effects of sin and keep some of the greater destructive forces of evil at bay.
- But we need a future king, a greater king who can once and for all end the tyranny of sin and evil.

- Politics can be good and noble; work for the common good. Seek the welfare of the city and nation where he has sent you (cf. Jer. 29:7).
- But do not put your hope in the kingdom of this world.

“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes” (Psalm 118:8–9, ESV).

- Micah’s message (and the message of all the prophets in some sense):
- The bad news: the kingdom of man is doomed, the kingdom of man is judged, the kingdom of man will fall.
- The good news: a good kingdom and a good kingdom is coming.
- One is coming forth from Bethlehem to rule and reign. And he is our future hope!

2.) The Ancient King.

- Notice between verses 1 and 2 there is a change of address.²
- Jerusalem, you will fall.
- But Bethlehem, you will produce a king.
- “Micah is purposefully disassociating the messianic reign from Jerusalem politics as his audience knew them” (Van Gemeren, 156). The kingdom to come is the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of man. But this is not just a new kingdom. It is a kingdom rooted in the ancient promises of God.

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days” (Micah 5:2, ESV).

- Jerusalem was the capital of Judah and a military stronghold.
- Bethlehem was a little farm town.
- But it was the little town that produced David, the greatest of all Israel’s kings; the king who ushered in a golden era.
- To go forward, God’s people must look backward.
- The house of David had failed.
- But God’s promises have not failed.
- God is sending a king; a future king who is also ancient.
- This is a deep hope on the human heart; our legends are filled with this
- Even the most secular among us are drawn to stories of the once and future king, the prince who was promised, and the chosen one.
- Why? God has carved onto the human heart the awareness of that we need a king.
- This king isn’t just a good king. He is an eternal king.³ This isn’t just a promised

² Kenneth L. Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 96.

³ “God had from the beginning determined to give his people an eternal king.” John Calvin and John

king with a great destiny. This king is the climax and focal point of history.

- This is the son who was promised to Eve who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3;15).
- This is the seed of Abraham who would be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:2-3).
- This is the heir who was promised to David who would have an everlasting kingdom would never end (2 Sam. 7).
- This is can only be true of a king who is not only man but also divine.
- He is not just from ancient days, he is “the Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9).

3.) The Shepherd King.

- Look at the character of this king.

“Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.” (Micah 5:3–4a, ESV).

- This presupposes judgment will take place. Jerusalem will fall. God’s people will go into exile. But then God will send a shepherd that will gather his flock; a shepherd is a king who is not just powerful, but who is good.
- Kings are disappointing.
- Hezekiah (who was king during Micah’s time) didn’t care that his actions would lead to the fall of his kingdom after he died (see 2 Kings 20:12-19).
- And he was one of the very best kings.
- The pains of childbirth are the pains of waiting.
- But this child is worth the wait. When the birth comes, the memory of pain fades and is displaced by joy.
- This king will not be a hireling who uses his people
- He will not be a tyrant who abuses his people.
- He will be a shepherd who leads, feeds, cares for, and rescues his people.
- The ancient world does not know a king like this. Neither do we.
- Here we have a combination of power and goodness.
- A shepherd who shepherds in the strength and majesty and greatness of God
- A king that could rule, a king that should rule.
- A king who is infinitely powerful and infinitely good

Owen, [*Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*](#), vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 299.

- Shouldn't our hearts long for such a king?

4.) The King of Nations.

"...And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth" (Micah 5:4b, ESV).

- Micah's message is to the nations, the peoples of the earth (cf. Mic. 1:2).
- This king will rule and bring security to "the ends of the earth."
- He is not a nationalistic savior.
- He is bringing God's kingdom to all people.
- He is not coming to restore Israel to a great political kingdom.
- He is bringing redemption to all creation.
- This is the vision and hope of the Bible
- Is our vision often too small?
- We need a king who comes not just to end our suffering, but all suffering; who comes not just to make our corner of the world better, but all things new.

5.) The King Who Brings Peace.

"And he shall be their peace..." (Micah 5:5a, ESV).

- The peace mentioned here is not just the temporary absence of armed conflict.
- It is the hope of "shalom" (שָׁלוֹם); God's perfection, wholeness, healing.
- The peace of the Messiah is nothing less than the renewal of God's creation.
- Here is a vision of that hope from Micah's contemporary Isaiah:

"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 25:6–8, ESV).

- The king of Micah's vision will not just bring this peace; *he will be* our peace.
- No wonder Herod was scared.
- For this king to come means that Herod's kingdom would come to an end.
- So Herod would attempt to murder this child. But he would fail.
- Rome would put this child on the cross. But he would rise again.

- This is the hope of the Prophet Micah.
- Judah will fall. Assyria will fall. Rome will fall.
- But the kingdom of Jesus – the child who would be born of Bethlehem, the child whom the magi came to worship – the kingdom of Jesus will endure forever.
- Jesus would be the future king, bringing an end the failed and broken kingdoms of this world.
- Jesus would be the ancient king; promised from the dawn of creation, who is completely god and man.
- Jesus will be the shepherd king; the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.
- Jesus will be the king of the nations; not just the Messiah of the Jewish people, but the savior of the world
- Jesus would be the king of peace, who has fought the enemies of sin, Satan, and death on our behalf. Jesus is the king who gives us access to peace with God.
- And what does this peace accomplish for us and give to us in the time being?
- Hope.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1–2, ESV).

- God’s kingdom has been launched in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- The full reality is not here yet. But it will be.
- So we wait and hope expectantly as an Advent people.
- We say come Lord Jesus Come quickly!
- We live lives that declare display the kingdom that is to come, as ambassadors.
- May we be a people who long for this kingdom with a sure hope and rest in this hope and embody this hope.

Community Group Discussion Starters

There will be no Community Group Discussion Questions this week. Instead, we encourage you to celebrate and feast with friends and family that Christ the King has come!