

### Prediction of the Messiah's Birthplace

#### Micah 5

Micah 5:1-2 - *"Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops. He has laid siege against us; they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.*

<sup>2</sup> *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."*

#### Background Notes

Micah 5:2 is one of the great Messianic predictions in the Bible: the prediction that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The location is pinpointed to "Bethlehem Ephrathah," a town that is only 5-6 miles from Jerusalem. Even though Bethlehem was just a small and insignificant town in those days, it would become the birthplace of the Messiah.

Did you know that this is the second Old Testament prophecy that is quoted in the New Testament? Isaiah 7:14 is quoted in Matthew 1: *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

Micah 5:2 is the second Old Testament prophecy found in the New Testament. It was quoted to Herod by the chief priests and scribes in Matthew 2, when the wise men asked where the King of the Jews would be born: *'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel'" (Matthew 2:6).*

Herod relayed this message to the wise men, and they went to Bethlehem and found the Lord. The wise men believed and acted on the Word when they heard it - and they found the Lord! The priests and scribes knew the Old Testament Scriptures, but they never came to the Lord.

There's a great lesson in this for us. Are we like the Jewish scholars who knew the Word and didn't act on it, and didn't live by it? Or are we like the wise men, who not only believed the Word of God, but also acted by faith on the Word of God?

What about verse 1? *"Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops. He has laid siege against us; they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek."* It seems that this is Micah's prediction of the future siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies under Nebuchadnezzar in 587BC. The "judge of Israel" who would be "struck on the

cheek” (a sign of great humiliation) would be King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. The Babylonians killed Zedekiah’s sons in his sight, then blinded him by gouging out his eyes, and took him as a prisoner to Babylon (2 Kings 25).

Why is that prophecy placed in the same context of the great Messianic prophecy in verse 2? I believe it’s because of the stark contrast. The last king of Judah, who was besieged and belittled, is here contrasted to the greatest King, the Messiah, who will come victoriously in the future. He will be the key to Israel’s deliverance!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem at His first coming.

Bethlehem was only a small Judean town - and yet God ordained that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem! We would have expected the Messiah to come from Jerusalem, the capital city, and the city of the beautiful Temple. But no! The Messiah would come from the small and insignificant town of Bethlehem. King David had come from the little town of Bethlehem, and the Messiah, David’s greater Son, would also be born in the little town of Bethlehem.

God loves to take the obscure, and use it for His glory. Whether people or places, nothing is too small for the Lord to take up and make significant - and that includes you and me, if we are willing to give ourselves to the Lord for His service.

Notice how the full humanity and the full deity of the Messiah is brought out in Micah 5:2. He would be born as a baby in Bethlehem. There’s his humanity. Yet His birth was not His beginning, because *“His goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”* Could this be said of any other baby? No! This baby would be the eternal Son of God Himself! The phrase, *“His goings forth from of old”* include His activity as Creator (Colossians 1) and His pre-incarnate appearances in the Old Testament as *“the Angel of the Lord.”*

Orthodox Judaism admits that the prophecy of Micah 5:2 has historically been interpreted as Messianic, and Orthodox Judaism is forced to admit that Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem, but the Jewish people do not yet acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. This powerful fulfilled prophecy testifies to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem at His first coming.

### 2. The Messiah will deliver Israel at His second coming.

Micah 5:3-5 - *“Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth. Then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel.*

*<sup>4</sup> And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And this One shall be peace.”*

Verse 3 includes the present State of Israel. Romans 11 teaches that Israel has *temporarily* been set aside from God’s place of favor, while the Gentiles have been brought into a position of privilege. But a time is coming in the future when a

godly remnant of Jewish people will be born out of the secular State of Israel, and Israel will be restored once again to her position of the Lord's favor. So the "she" of verse 3 is not a reference to Mary, the mother of Jesus, but rather to the nation of Israel. And the "birth" does not refer to the birth of Christ, but rather to the birth of the "godly remnant" of Jewish believers who will here on this earth when the Lord returns to deliver Israel.

Verse 4: *"And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth. And this One shall be peace."* As the good Shepherd, He will feed His flock, and His Name will be great to the ends of the earth.

In verses 5-15, we learn that when the Lord returns, He will deliver Israel in four different ways:

### **- The Lord will deliver Israel from the future "Assyrian."**

Micah 5:5-6 - *"When the Assyrian comes into our land, and when he treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princely men. <sup>6</sup> They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances. Thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he comes into our land and when he treads within our borders."*

Who is this "Assyrian"? He is not Sennacherib, the Assyrian who invaded Judah in 701BC, because Israel did not conquer Assyria (*"the land of Nimrod"*) at that time, as verse 6 describes. I believe this coming Assyrian is the End Times "king of the north" who will invade Israel in the future, as prophesied in Daniel 11 and Joel 2. I believe this "Assyrian" will be a separate individual (not the "antichrist" or the "Roman beast" of 666 notoriety) who will arise during the End Times out of the area of the ancient Assyrian Empire. As I see it, he will be a "Saddam Hussein/Osama Bin Laden" type of figure who will head up a militant Muslim coalition in the future - but he will be defeated because the Lord will return and deliver Israel!

The *"seven and eight shepherds"* or leaders (v5) that God will use in the defeat of this Assyrian may be literal or figurative. In any case, the Lord will deliver Israel from the coming Assyrian.

### **- The Lord will deliver Israel from all her enemies.**

Micah 5:7-9 - *"Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass that tarry for no man nor wait for the sons of men. <sup>8</sup> And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, who, if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver. <sup>9</sup> Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off."*

In that future day Israel will be like a lion, and all her enemies will be cut off, because the Lord will fight for her. He will deliver Israel from her enemies.

**- The Lord will deliver Israel from all warfare.**

Micah 5:10-11 - *“And it shall be in that day,” says the Lord, “That I will cut off your horses from your midst and destroy your chariots. <sup>11</sup> I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds.”*

When the Lord returns in judgment and destroys all of Israel’s enemies, He will also scrap all instruments of warfare and break down all fortifications - because they will no longer be needed! Remember Micah 4:3? *“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.* It will be a time of worldwide peace under the reign of Christ.

**- The Lord will deliver Israel from idolatry.**

Micah 5:12-15 – *“I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. <sup>13</sup> Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst. You shall no more worship the work of your hands. <sup>14</sup> I will pluck your wooden images from your midst. Thus I will destroy your cities. <sup>15</sup> And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard.”*

Idolatry will return to Israel in the last days. But when the Lord returns, He will judge and destroy Israel’s enemies, and He will also purge the land of Israel of all vestiges of idolatry. The Messiah will deliver Israel from idolatry at His second coming.

## **Practical Application**

### **Have you received “the Bread from Bethlehem”?**

In John 6 the Lord Jesus said that He is the Bread of Life. And the name “Bethlehem” means “House of Bread.” Isn’t that interesting? The Bread of Life was born in Bethlehem, the House of Bread.

Have you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life? The only way to satisfy your spiritual emptiness and hunger is through putting your faith and trust in Him!

Have you received the Bread from Bethlehem?