

The Glorious Reign of the King from Bethlehem – *Micah 5:1-6*

Introduction – We already carefully studied several of the implications of Micah 5:2 being fulfilled with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Matthew makes clear in his gospel that, without a doubt, this prophecy is speaking of Jesus (Matt 2:5-6). The New Testament acts as an inspired commentary on the Old. But if that is true, then we can now go back to Micah 5:1-6 and consider the entire passage in light of Jesus' reign being fulfilled. In it, we learn of the glorious reign upon this earth that is given to the King from Bethlehem. Christmas is not only the celebration of a little child born. It is the beginning of the universal reign of Jesus the Messiah.

A Warning and a Promise in Present Distress (context, vv1-6) – Micah warns Israel through cycles of prophecies that she will be under siege from Assyria for her sins (including v1). But the LORD will bring forth a Ruler from Bethlehem (v2) who will bring the remnant back to a restored land (v3) where this Shepherd-King shall provide security and peace based upon a greatness that extends to the ends of the earth (v4). He will work through His people in such a way that when severe attacks come upon His kingdom, He will in fact not only deliver His people, but invade those lands Himself with His kingdom-rule (vv5-6).

A Glorious Reign Comes Forth from Bethlehem – David's lineage has failed and although David's house has failed, God's covenant with David will never fail. To show forth His faithfulness, God leaves Jerusalem's throne and returns to Bethlehem. A parallel prophecy to Micah 5:2 is Isaiah 11:1 – "*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*" From Jesse's stump God will raise up the second and greater David. His reign is then described.

Bringing Back the Lost (v3) – Before Mary gave birth, Israel endured seven centuries under the continued sway of foreign domination. Withstanding the siege of Sennacherib, the return from exile in Babylon – these are all types of a greater deliverance that would come from Bethlehem. After the Ruler came, a real remnant was brought forth in the power of the Holy Spirit where thousands of Jews were converted in one day, followed by massive conversions in the first years of the church (Acts 2:41, 47). This Jewish sect quickly spread to include Gentiles who put their faith in the Messiah (John 10:16, Gal 3:7-9) fulfilling the promises to both David and even going back further to Abraham (Gen 12:3).

Shepherding His People (v4) – The little Child grew to become the Ruler, even over His father, David (Psalm 110:1), and even more than David, He came as a Servant and Shepherd. He did not come to serve, but to be served and to give His life as a ransom (Mark 10:45). "*He shall stand and shepherd*" signals His vigilance and active involvement in His shepherding role.

In the Strength of Yahweh (v4) – He stands and shepherds "*in the strength of Yahweh*," that is, the strength of the One who spoke and all we see came into existence and "stands" (Psalm 33:9, Isaiah 48:13). Though He is a man, He is not subject to any weakness; though put to the test, His strength is irresistible.

In the Majesty of His Name (v4) – He stands and shepherds "*in the majesty of the name of Yahweh His God.*" Jesus, born of a woman, calls Yahweh "His God" (Matt 27:46, John 20:17). His work is in the majesty of the name of Yahweh in that – first, it displays God's majesty for this Child is in fact, "*Mighty God*" (Isaiah 9:6) and – second, His work displays the majesty of the character of Yahweh: what Jesus did shows us what the Father is like. It also means that all of the work of the salvation of the world magnifies His name alone; the only thing to boast in is the cross of our Lord Jesus (Gal 6:14). Jesus was born to die; and He was sent to die that His majesty might be revealed. For His majesty, His glory, is gracious (Eph 1:6).

Universal Reign (v4) – All well and good, but when and where is the glory of His reign revealed? His victory abides now upon the earth – that is why He came to the earth. "*...And they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth.*" Christ's dominion must be over all the earth even now. He said as much (Matt 28:18) and it also follows logically. If Jesus is God then Jesus must be Lord of all, for He created it all; His government knows no end (Isaiah 9:6-7). This is also why He is known as the One who sits at the right hand of God the Father until all His enemies are made a footstool (Psalm 110:1-2).

Universal Peace (v5) – It is not just that He brings peace. *He is peace*. He is "*peace on earth*" (Luke 2:14). This peace is only secure because of His universal reign. But because of His universal reign, peace has come to the earth.

When Persecutions Come (vv5-6) – Does this sound like nothing more than "pie in the sky theology?" What universal reign? What peace? How can this be down here on this earth filled with strife and war and injustice? Jesus promised persecutions against His kingdom and His princes (John 15:20). But vv5-6 give us the pattern of how God turns this around. Tertullian said, "*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.*" When Saul led the first persecution of the church, the gospel went forth to many other cities and peoples (as though right into the heart of "*Assyria*"). When Rome, having become Christian, was sacked by the barbarians, Christians were carried off into slavery in other lands, and the gospel with them.

Our Present Distresses – Micah prophesied in a time of horrible distresses and did so with great hope. Jesus was born in times of great distresses for Israel and in just one generation from His time on earth, God's covenant people were scattered again, their temple destroyed forever and Jerusalem laid waste. We live in a time of great distresses upon the church and, worse, within the church. God is certainly disciplining us again – but this is no sign that the end is near. Rather it is a sign-remembrance that God is near. And Who is that God? He is the God of our salvation, and the salvation of this world. Merry Christmas.