

Who is Like the Lord? Israel's future king, Messiah

Intro: In previous lessons on Micah's prophecies we have seen that the prophet revealed an exciting message to the people of Israel. He revealed that the God of Israel would have a great influence on the people of the nations resulting in their listening to Him and living in peace with one another. He revealed that the former dominion of Israel under David would be restored. He revealed that though Israel would be disciplined by the captivity, they would return to their land and in time God would give them victory over their enemies.

At the center of these amazing prophecies is the coming of the one the Jews called Messiah who would establish His kingdom with the resulting blessings Micah has described. Up to this point in our study Micah has not spoken of Him, but now in Micah 5 we see that all of Israel's hopes are to be fulfilled in their coming King.

The Messiah is Coming!

His origins

"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.

The expression Bethlehem Ephrathah identifies the place of the Messiah's birth as being the same as that of King David. All Jews understood the text in this way as we can see from Mt. 2:4-5.

And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet, (Matthew 2:4-5)

And the prophet stresses the idea that Bethlehem was relatively small. That is, that its populations were not large enough to be classified among the "alephim" of Israel (the express denotes the units of a thousand in which the tribes were divided).

The prophet also stresses that idea that this coming one would be "ruler in Israel"—what the NT would called "the king of the Jews".

The expression "for Me" indicates that the coming King would fulfill God's purposes for Israel.

His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." (Micah 5:2)

I've often wondered what the Jews thought when they read this part of the text. Did they grasp the full significance of such a statement?

The expression "goings forth" might indicate His prior activity and this is said to be "from the day of eternity". There is then the clear indication of the divine nature of the Christ. The

Messiah comes out of eternity into time—the birth in Bethlehem would be the point of entry into time but not the beginning of the Messiah’s existence

Thus, the two expressions would suggest a Messiah who came into this world in tiny Bethlehem, the city of David, but who had existed from eternity and thus was God.

His kingly work

During His reign Israel will return to His brethren. Thus He will be a rallying figure for the return of Israel.

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. (Micah 5:3)

This part of the prophecy reveals two important truths about Israel.

Israel would be for a time without a king and kingdom. God would have “given them up”. Thus Israel would go through a period of intense suffering. The expression “she who is in labor” does not refer to Mary, the mother of Jesus, but to the daughter of Zion who would suffer great pain before her deliverer came! (Cf Mic. 4:10) God’s people would be gathered and united again.

Shepherd God’s people

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. (Micah 5:4)

The expression “shepherd” was commonly used for the role of the king in Israel. It conveyed the idea of guidance and protection (cf. Psalm 23). The exaltation of the king is seen in how He shepherds (i.e. in strength of the Lord and in the majesty of His God).

The next sentence anticipates the second blessing from the new king:

Protect them from their enemies

“They will remain” suggest that Israel will no longer be taken away in judgment by captivity but instead will no longer be vulnerable to her enemies. This truth is made more concrete in the imagery of the OT language:

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 at its entrances; and He will deliver us from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory. (Micah 5:5-6)

The prophecy identifies the enemy as “Assyria” because that was the prevailing threat at the time. And the idea conveyed is

that the king will evoke a faithful response from His people. Rallying around him are “seven shepherd and eight leaders of men”, that is, others who will join with him in the fight. And they are pictured together as having dominion of the Assyrian territory just as the Assyrians had at one time had dominion over Israel.

Give them peace

And this One will be our peace.

This is the effect of the Messiah’s rule. Because He guides them they will no longer need the discipline of captivity. And because He protects them, no enemy will succeed in overcoming them again.

But how are these prophecies to be fulfilled?

The fulfillment in Jesus Christ

There is a king who fulfills all the features of Micah’s prophecy—Jesus Christ.

He came out of Bethlehem but His goings forth were from eternity.

He was born in Bethlehem the city of David (Lk. 2).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:1-3)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Because He was born of a virgin, He had an existence prior to His coming and yet entered into time as a man. Thus He is both Son of God and Son of Man!

He gathers faithful Israel into one united kingdom.

By laying down His life for the sheep he provided a motivation to bring all God’s people together into one body, the church.

“And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd. (John 10:16)

He shepherds His flock.

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

He protects them from their enemies.

“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. “I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30)

He gives them peace.

Peace with God and with fellow-members of the kingdom.
And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:17-18)

Victory over the enemy

And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20)

The prophecies of Micah are not fulfilled in a geo-political kingdom, but in a spiritual one over which Jesus has come forth out of Bethlehem to rule. He shepherds His people as the good shepherd, guiding and protecting them. Consequently they can live in peace and security. This new reality is couched in the language of the old reality.

Conclusion: Today we enjoy the great blessings of the kingdom Micah foresaw. The King has come in the person of Jesus Christ and we, His church, enjoy His guidance, protection, and victory.