

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

CHRISTMAS — THE CITY

Micah 5:1-5

Pastor Miles McPherson – December 15, 2013

MEMORY VERSE

“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. And he shall be their peace.” (Micah 5:4–5a, ESV)

DISCUSSION STARTERS

The Old Testament gives many prophecies concerning Jesus and His kingdom. What promises from God do find most comforting, encouraging, and/or empowering?

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In this study we will explore the blessings and promises found in Micah’s prophecy about the coming Messiah. Begin by reading through Micah 5:1-5. In verses 1-2, Micah speaks of the coming Ruler who would liberate God’s people from the oppressor. He speaks of the place, purpose and significance of the birth of this Ruler.

The Place (v. 2a)

Bethlehem was well known as the hometown of David, Israel’s greatest king; yet it was never a great or influential city. It was truly little among the thousands of Israel. Yet God chose it as the birthplace of the Messiah, the Ruler in Israel. The older name Ephrathah (“fruitful”) is added to Bethlehem (“house of bread”) to distinguish the southern town of this name from the town of the same name in the region of Zebulun (Josh. 19:15). It’s appropriate that the “Bread of Life” (John 6:35) came from the “house of bread”.

The Purpose (v. 2b)

From Bethlehem “he shall go forth to be ruler over Israel.” A glorious Ruler would again come out of Bethlehem. At the time of Jesus’ birth it was well known that the long awaited Messiah would be born in Bethlehem as Micah foretold (Matt. 2:5-6; John 7:42).



The Significance (vv. 2b – 3a)

The Bethlehem Ruler would be one who had prior existence. “His goings forth are from of old.” He was active on behalf of his people long before he appeared at Bethlehem. Jesus did not hesitate to affirm his preexistence (John 8:58). This prophecy, however, does not merely assert that the Bethlehem Ruler came forth from heaven, but that he had been actively involved in the leadership of his people in the distant past.

Read the following verses about the eternity of Jesus and discuss the truths that they reveal about Jesus:

John 1:1-3; 17:5, 24; Eph. 1:4; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 1:8; 22:13

Blessings of the Messiah’s Birth

In the second half of this passage (vv. 2b-5a) we read eight different blessings or promises that will follow the birth of the Messiah or Ruler. Review the eight blessings and discuss the promises about Jesus that are most significant to you.

1. Micah first promises a conversion or “return” of God’s people. This includes both the “rest of his brothers’ and “people of Israel.” Israelites were his brethren according to the flesh. They were the first to receive the blessing of Messiah’s coming. The “rest of his brothers” must be the spiritual brothers or unconverted Gentiles (Matt. 12:50; John 10:16; 11:51-52; Heb. 2:11).
2. Bethlehem’s Ruler would “stand and shepherd” the flock of the Lord. The term “shepherd” in the ancient Near East embodies the ideal of kingship. The term “stand” signals vigilance, active involvement in his shepherding role. New Testament theology frequently uses the shepherd imagery of Jesus.
3. The Ruler would be endowed with “the strength of Yahweh.” He is worthy of the throne. This Ruler is not subject to human weakness. Though put to the test, his strength is irresistible.
4. The Ruler reflects “the majesty (*ge’on*) of the name of Yahweh his God.” He would possess the same glory in which Yahweh manifests his deity on the earth. He is in fact the Mighty God of Isaiah 9:5.
5. This Ruler’s authority is delegated to him by “his God.” Since he was born of a human mother, Yahweh can be called “his God.” While in the flesh the Son was subordinate to the Father (Matt. 27:46; John 20:17). The language points to a special relation between this Ruler and Yahweh.
6. The Ruler’s power would provide security and stability for God’s people, “They shall dwell secure.” The original promise to David was that under his descendants Israel would never again be oppressed by wicked people (2 Sam. 7:10). This ideal was not realized in Old Testament times. Under the Messiah’s powerful reign, however, the people of God would enjoy perfect security.
7. The future Ruler would rule over a universal kingdom. “And now he will be great unto the ends of the earth. He would be known and feared to the very ends of the earth. This universal sovereignty is also the subject of other personal messianic prophecies.



8. The future Ruler would be the hope of deliverance. “And this one will be peace.” “Peace” (*shalom*) is salvation in its most comprehensive sense. It involves deliverance from danger, security and prosperity. The Apostle Paul (Eph. 2:14) sees the unification of Jew and Gentile in the New Covenant Israel as the fulfillment of this aspect of Micah’s prophecy.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Spend some time in prayer focusing on the first promise from Micah’s prophecy of the birth of the Messiah. Pray through the remaining seven promises the rest of the week, focusing on one promise each day. Do this individually or with a prayer partner. Right down any reflections and/or revelations from God during your prayer time this coming week and share with your group at the next meeting.

Notes:

