

30. Jesus in Micah

December 29, 2016

I used to think that the third world countries or poor and immoral countries are the only ones to have blatantly corrupt governments. In the last 8 years, we have eyewitnessed that our own federal government was becoming one of them under the intentionally closed eyes of the main stream media.

Society in the ancient southern kingdom, Judah was rapidly changing from rural to urban. In defiance of the Law of Moses, wealthy and greedy people were buying up small family farms and developing huge land holdings, which created serious problems for the poor. Having come from a farming community, Micah became a voice for the oppressed poor and rebuked the selfish rich people and the government officials who were in the wealthy people's payroll. Amos echoed the same message in his Book as we studied last week.

Micah saw the coming judgment of the northern kingdom, Israel under Assyria in 722 B.C. as well as the fall of Jerusalem and Judah under the Babylonians in 606-596 B.C. He sought to call the Jews back to faithful worship of Jehovah God and sincere obedience to His covenant, but they refused to listen. He pled for social justice and a concern for the helpless, but the people would not repent.

A. GOD'S PROPHET MICAH

Micah 1:1 The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Again, like prophet Nahum, we don't know much about the author of this Book – Micah. Micah's name is an abbreviated form of "Micaiah" and means "Who is like Jehovah?" like the English name "Michael". Actually, Michael originated from the Hebrew word "Micaiah El". Even though we don't know much about him, we can tell he had a strong sense of his own calling as a prophet.

Micah 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, And of justice and might, To declare to Jacob his transgression And to Israel his sin.

He was from the city of Moresheth which was located about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. V1 tells us that Micah was prophesying during the time of the last half of the eighth century, B.C. He was a contemporary of Isaiah in Judah and Amos and Hosea in Israel.

B. JESUS IN HUMAN TEMPTATION

Micah 2:1-3 Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, Because it is in the power of their hand. 2 They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, A man and his inheritance. 3 Therefore thus says the Lord: "Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, From which you cannot remove your necks; Nor shall you walk haughtily, For this is an evil time.

The Mosaic Law required that the land remain with the families and within the tribes. If they disobeyed Him, they defiled the land and invited His judgment. If anybody sold family property, it was only until the next Year of Jubilee, at which time all land reverted back to the original owners. This arrangement kept the rich from oppressing the poor and helped to stabilize the economy.

But the greedy and wealthy people in Micah's day were bent on acquiring large estates on which they could enslave the poor and, in turn, they make huge profits with little investment. So they made their ruthless plans in bed at night and then got up early the next morning to carry them out with the help of the government officials who were in their pockets.

It mattered little to these greedy men that they took away farms illegally and evicted families from their homes mercilessly. They practiced the world's version of 'The Golden Rule': "Whoever has the gold makes the rules." They forgot that the Lord owned the land, the Lord made the laws, and the Lord has compassion on the poor and the oppressed.

Privilege brings responsibility, and responsibility brings accountability. The prophet held the government and people of Israel accountable for two particular sins: covetousness and listening to false prophets.

The Word of God doesn't tell us that we just fall into sin without any premises. We give in to temptation first. That is when we start to sin intentionally and strategically. James, a half brother of Jesus, the pillar of the early Jerusalem church nailed it in his Book:

James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Temptation itself is not a sin, but giving in to it is. Our Lord Jesus was tempted more than any humans. He was tempted for forty days and forty nights straight without anyone's intervention in the wilderness. And He was tempted by Satan himself. But Jesus has never sinned. Before you think, "Oh, Jesus didn't have a problem, because He was God." I beg to differ. Remember, He was a 100% human while He was a 100% God on earth.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

C. JESUS IN THE BREAKER

Micah 2:12-13 "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, Like a flock in the midst of their pasture; They shall make a loud noise because of so many people. 13 The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it; Their king will pass before them, With the Lord at their head."

Each day I realize that our great sins cannot "out-sin" our God's grace and love. Yes, where sin abounded, His grace abounded much more, as Romans 5:20 says. Though these Israelites sinned against the Lord greatly, He still promised them His restoration through the Messiah.

"The one who breaks open will come up before them" in v12 can be translated as a title – the King James Version has it as the "Breaker." We can see this as a more obscure, but no less precious Messianic title of Jesus – "The Breaker." In this office, Jesus is the Captain and Leader of His people, advancing in front of His flock.

D. JESUS IN THE PROPHECY OF HIS BIRTH

Micah 5:2-5a "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." 3 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. 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; 5 And this One shall be peace.

In this time of humiliation under foreign powers, God would raise up a great Ruler from a humble place – Bethlehem. 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. However, God chose it as the birthplace of the Messiah, the Ruler in Israel. Bethlehem means "House of Bread", and Jesus is the Bread of Life in John 6:35.

In Matthew chapter 2, as we studied last Sunday, after the wise men left to go see the Child in Bethlehem, king Herod asked his own smart people, the chief priest, and scribes where the Christ was supposed to be born. They quoted v2 right off the bat. If these scribes really believed what they knew, they would have jumped to their feet to go down to Bethlehem, which was located only 5.5 miles south of Jerusalem. Though their knowledge of the Messiah was on the tips of their tongues, their love for Him was far away from their hearts.

This prophecy was written about 700 years before our Savior's birth. Yet, in this prophecy, the Lord is speaking to us both past and future of our Lord Jesus.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. This means that Jesus was there before time ever existed. There was never a time when the Lord Jesus did not exist.

John 17:24 Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He existed as the Second Person of the Trinity. The passage tells us that there was a relationship of love, fellowship, and shared glory that the Father and the Son had in eternity past. Though the name "Jesus" was not known as a name for the Second Person of the Trinity until the angel Gabriel announced it to Mary, the eternal Son was there.

Then, we find six words in v5 that point to another title of our Lord Jesus: the "Prince of Peace" that comes from Isaiah 9:6. During the Millennial kingdom, there will be absolute peace and security through our Lord Jesus. Can you imagine no bickering, no road rage, no argument at family-get-together, no war among nations?

By the way, do you know anyone who fulfilled his or her own birth prophecy? I don't. The following probabilities are taken from Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks* (Moody Press, 1957) to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability.

Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to Jesus' 8 prophecies, including Jesus' birth prophecy, "we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all 8 prophecies is 1 in 1017." That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000.

