

Micah 5:2-5

2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people 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 live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; 5 and he shall be the one of peace.

Micah is a prophet during the exile which was a time of great stress and turmoil. The kingdom was divided and the mighty army of the Assyrian empire wiped out Israel. The Jews were scattered and in exile. During Micah's day, Judah is now being threatened. This is also a time of great prophecy because biblical prophecy mostly surrounds the exile. The prophets are men of God. They speak the word of God. This means that they speak out against the sins of the people and warn of God's judgment.

There are two types of prophets; a true prophet and a false prophet. The true prophet speaks a word that matches the other true prophets. That's because their word is all about God and the will of God. But the will of God is in conflict with the will of man. The false prophet will put the desires of the people first so that they, in turn, support him. They support the institution that supports them. The word that they deliver is the word the audience wants to hear, it is a word that supports secular influences. They insist that all is well. However, Micah and the other true prophets warn the people that all is not well.

True prophet knows the will of God. He knows that God is concerned with people sharing the resources that God has provided to them. God wants us to love the other people that God created and loves. God wants us to obey the commandments and worship in spirit and in truth. God is pleased with worship and God is pleased with justice. But God is not pleased with worship when there is no care for humanity. The life of the worshiper must conform to the will of God.

Micah addresses major biblical themes of justice, peace, and the Messiah. He sees the decay in society and knows that there is a consequence for the people not abiding by the will of God. The greed of the rich and powerful creates poverty and extreme inequality. He sees the military threat of the foreign powers threaten to remove the king and wipe out the nation. His theological interpretation for the political events is one of punishment. He sees the devastation as a consequence apostasy and corruption that is deserved for turning away from God.

The prophecy comes with a promise of relief at a time of suffering. The people are to believe and not lose heart. In the prophetic announcement of salvation the people are promised by God, through a true profit of God, that they will return to the Promised Land and God will send to them a deliverer for Israel. This gives people great hope as they anticipate the arrival of the Messiah. He will usher in a time of strength, justice, and peace. The nation will be reunited. The kingship will be restored and endured forever. The new leader will be a righteous shepherd from Bethlehem and will rule on behalf of God. He will be strong enough to defeat the most powerful enemies. Zion will be the center of worship for all the nations. Over Zion will rein the one from Bethlehem; the new king, the Messiah, our Savior.

Bethlehem is a small town of big importance located 5 miles south of Jerusalem. King David was a native of Bethlehem and was anointed there by Samuel. The nation was anticipating that their new ruler would come to them from Bethlehem. In the Gospel of Matthew, the chief priests and scribes quote Micah 5:2 in response to Herod's question of where the Messiah will be born. Bethlehem is an insignificant small town that was only known for being King David's home where the promised new ruler, descendent of David, was to be born. He is not a ruler of war; he is the one of peace. The allusion to King David is that this new ruler will bring them back to their glory days. The coming ruler is a shepherd but in the minds of the people that anticipate his arrival, he is a glorious king.

The central core of Micah's message is that the people are about to be taken and deported into exile. The Lord will rescue you and your enemies will be defeated. The Lord will allow the people to suffer at the hand of their enemies but also promises a ruler like a shepherd with dominion that extends to the ends of the earth. God has a plan. God will rescue the people in exile and the promised ruler will be one of peace.

One of the prominent roles of Matthew is to reveal the birth of Jesus. The word for the people of that day was written centuries before Jesus came. We were not the first audience, but our questions and concerns are the same. Our sins are same. We need the word of God, the word of warning, and the word of hope that extends beyond the present ordeal. In this sense, the scriptures speak directly to us.

Everything in the New Testament is centered on Jesus being the long awaited Messiah and the Son of God. Two thousand years ago Christians confessed Jesus is the Christ. The sign of the cross sums up the New Testament. The one hanging there, the one that is suffering is the new king, the Messiah, Son of God, The nature of God is a biblical theme of God choosing the least likely of us to accomplish God's purpose. and the One of Peace.