

Micah 5:1-5a (NIV)

- 1 Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod.
- 2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."
- 3 Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.
- 4 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.
- 5 And he will be their peace.

33-05-01-A Birth at Bread-House

prophecy, Advent, Christmas, bread, Prince of Peace

Micah 5:1-5a

God wants what started in Bethlehem to be fulfilled in our hearts.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading)

–OT prophets knew what to prophesy, but not always what a prophecy fully meant. They told of events soon to occur that were often prophetic of realities in a distant future. For example, v.1, Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod? spoke of how Babylon would soon capture Jerusalem. **But** there would be another time when an occupied Jerusalem would see her King struck in the face– Mat 27:29b-30. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

–Along with many other details about Christ, Micah foretold exactly where He would be born 700 years before it happened. *First, he told...*

- I. **Where Christ Would Be Born**– v.2, "*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.*"
 - A. Bethlehem had been the location of King David's birth...
 1. It was a small, insignificant place, and David, least in his family, was a lowly shepherd when God told him in 2 Sam 5:2b, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'
 2. Bethlehem (city of David) would be birthplace to another ruler...
 - a. The Jewish leaders knew this– Mat 2:4, When he [Herod] had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. (Their answer was to quote Mic 5:2)
 - b. Not knowing He was born in Bethlehem, some argued that Jesus of Nazareth couldn't be the Christ– John 7:42, "Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?"
 - B. God's logic is seen in the meaning of Bethlehem ["house of bread"]
 1. Man's true hunger is for the Word– Deu 8:3b, ...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.
 2. Jesus is that Word we hunger for– John 1:1,14, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(Micah affirms John's claim for Christ's divinity, saying in v.2b (NASB), "His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.")

3. The Bread needed to nurture spiritual life is Jesus Christ– John 6:51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (again, no mere human can offer us this)
4. Fruitfulness results from the Word, when properly received (as seen in the *Parable of the Sower*)– Mat 13:23, "But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." [Again, the logic of God in the name *Ephrathah*, which means "fruitfulness"]

TRANS: Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), "Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, If he's not born in thee thy soul is still forlorn." The world longs for food to stop the spiritual hunger-ache inside the soul! What bread can satisfy this hunger? It's the *Bread* that came out of *Bread-House (Bethlehem!)*, and all who feed on this *Bread* will not only live forever, but live in *fruitfulness (Ephrathah!)* **God wants what started in Bethlehem to be fulfilled in our hearts. Micah also foretold...**

II. When Christ Would Be Born– v.3, *Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.*

- A. It would be after a time of abandonment (400 silent years with no prophet from Malachi to John the Baptist, who announced Christ)
- B. This prophetic abandonment would last until a birth happened: "until the time when she who is in labor gives birth" (at Bread-House).
 1. Isaiah had also foretold this birth– Isa 7:14, Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. / Isa 9:6, For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 2. Mary's virgin-birth of Christ fulfilled it– Mat 1:21-23, She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."
- C. There's MORE to this prophecy: v.3, "abandoned until the time when... the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites" What brothers are these? Jews scattered in captivity? OR did God have a larger picture?

1. Jesus did come with a larger picture– John 10:16, I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.
2. Paul explains– Gal 3:26,29, You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus... If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Paul further explains in Gal 4:4-5 (ESV), But when the **fullness of time** had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

CONCLUSION:

– Many think this "fullness of time" was the *Pax Romana* when Rome gave a common *language*, *safe travel*, and a *cosmopolitan* spirit to the Mediterranean, making it ripe for the spread of the Gospel. But, with the enhancement of modern communication, I say the time is ripe NOW for what God started in Bethlehem to be fulfilled in our hearts.

–The rest of Micah's words in this passage read like a NT commentary: "He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace."

–Nazarene clergyman C. Neil Strait: "The coming of Christ by way of a Bethlehem manger seems strange and stunning. But when we take him out of the manger and invite him into our hearts, then the meaning unfolds and the strangeness vanishes.

–In Micah's prophecy, two questions were answered: Where would the Christ be born and When? But this closing phrase, "And he will be their peace," suggests the most important question, **Where is Jesus, the Prince of Peace now?** Is He in your heart? If so, **when** was He born there? And if not, **when** will He be born there? That birth can happen today, right now in fact. Let's pray.