

But Thou, Bethlehem

Sermon Delivered on December 10th, 2017
AM Service

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Text:

Micah 5:1 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. 2: But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Introduction

In this chapter, the prophet Micah prophesied the coming troubles and distresses of the Jewish nation. The nation of Israel is ripe for judgment because they have **become corrupt** and had **broken their covenant with God**.

“Micah prophesied during a period of social injustice in Judah. False prophets preached for riches, not for righteousness. Princes thrived on cruelty, violence, and corruption. Priests ministered more for greed than for God. Landlords stole from the poor and evicted widows. Judges lusted after bribes. Business used deceitful scales... Sin had infiltrated every segment of society. A word from God was mandatory.” - (Talk Thru the Bible, p 261)

But having showed how the nation of Israel will be severely judge under the hand of the enemies, Micah gave a prophesy of the coming Messiah and His kingdom to support the people of God in the day of these troubles. Micah rapidly transition from threat of judgment to promise of deliverance to encourage the faith of God's people.

The Bible speaks about the first and the second coming of Christ. In our text Micah speaks of both of them in one verse.

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Notice the phrase ... yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

This obviously refers to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Notice how Micah describes Him ... whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. He speaks of Him as the One “whose origins are from of old, from ancient times”. Jesus had no beginning but existed eternally with God the Father. He alone could make the claim ...

John 8:58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am.**

As Spurgeon says *“Before there was any Abraham, there was this glorious Christ of ours existing as the Eternal I AM, in all the infinity of His glory.”*

This morning consider with me three things about Christ’s coming.

I - The Prophecy of Christ’s Coming

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

There is nothing in the birth of Christ that is coincidence. Everything about His birth is **planned** and **ordained** and **prophesied**. He was born according to God’s plan. The exact **date**, the exact **place**, and the exact **circumstances** surrounding the birth of Christ were all prophesied and planned.

There are very many prophecies in the Old Testament of the coming and the birth of Christ.

The first prophecy is found in ...

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Another is found in ...

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Yet another one in ...

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7: Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Then in our text ...

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

These prophecies of Christ’s coming was made **over 700 years before the birth of Christ**, and they were all fulfilled literally when Jesus Christ came into the world.

That the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem was known by the religious leaders.

Matthew 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2: Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3: When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4: And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5: And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6: And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

How did the Chief Priests and Scribes know that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea? The end of verse 5 and verse 6 give us the answer. They knew because God had recorded the fact through His prophet Micah. So, in the fullness of time, Micah's prophecy was fulfilled literally.

Just a side note:

Mathematically speaking, the probability of anyone fulfilling this amount of prophecy is close to impossible. Mathematicians put it this way:

1 person fulfilling 8 prophecies: 1 chance in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (10 to the 17th power)

1 person fulfilling 48 prophecies 1 chance in 10 to the 157th power

1 person fulfilling 300+ prophecies: Only Jesus!

This is one of the powerful proofs of the supernatural origin of the Bible. The Old Testament prophets predicted minute details of events that were fulfilled in the New Testament.

Psalm 119:160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

II – The Place of Christ's Coming

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

None of us can select our birthplace and circumstances, but Jesus can! Where was Jesus born? **Exactly the place that Micah predicted, in Bethlehem!** There are actually two Bethlehem's mentioned in the Bible, namely Bethlehem in **Zebulun** and Bethlehem in **Judah**, the Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Since there are more than one Bethlehem's in the Bible, **Micah is very careful to say that the Saviour would be born in Bethlehem Ephratah or Bethlehem Judah.**

1. Bethlehem was a very small town

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah describes Bethlehem as "little among the thousands of Judah" that is too small to be among the people of Judah. It is a small town and too small to be even mentioned in the list of more than 100 towns in **Joshua 15:21-63**.

Even the well known Christmas carol recognizes this fact in the title “*O Little Town of Bethlehem.*”

How wonderful it is that our Lord was not born in Jerusalem or Rome, in New York or London! Our Lord always lives amongst humble people.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, **with him also** that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

2. Bethlehem is a very significant town

It was a little town, yet so significant. It was the birthplace of our Saviour! The word Bethlehem means ‘**House of Bread**’, and Ephrathah means ‘**fruitfulness**’. Our Lord described Himself as the Bread of Life who alone could give satisfaction to human souls (John 6:35), and He alone is the One who can produce within us real fruit for His glory (John 15:5). This no is not an accident.

How fitting it is for Jesus Christ to be born in Bethlehem? The ‘**Bread of Life**’ born in the ‘**house of bread.**’

John 6:48 I am that bread of life. 49: Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50: This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51: I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. He is the Bread that came down from heaven. He is the Bread of His people, on which they feed. Anyone who feeds on this bread shall never die, he shall live forever. Have you partaken of this Bread?

III – The Purpose of Christ’s Coming

Why did Jesus come to Bethlehem? Why was He born of the Virgin Mary? Why did He leave Heaven and come into this world of sin? There were two main reasons why He came, and Micah speaks about both of them:

1. He came to redeem His people

Micah 5:1 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

Micah tells us this in Micah 5:1 – “*They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod.*” Here surely is an indication of the fact that our Lord was born to die. He is indeed “**the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world**” (Revelation 13:8). In the eternal purpose of God it was decreed that in the fullness of time He would come to be the Sin-bearer and Redeemer of His people - look up Isaiah 53:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4-5; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Peter 2:24.

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 12:47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

2. He came to rule over His people

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

The word 'ruler' may be translated 'governor', and the thought is given emphasis in ...

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7: Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

He is the 'Prince of peace,' whose government and peace shall never end. The Messiah will rule His people as a caring and protecting Shepherd.

Closing Thoughts

About 2,000 years ago, Jesus came to earth to be born in a humble manner in Bethlehem to redeem us from our sins and to bring us back to God. In order to redeem us, He had to die on the cross and He did. Now He is risen from the dead and He offers eternal life to everyone who would believe. Millions have already received this gift and have been completely forgiven. This Christmas season will you humble yourself and accept His gift of eternal by repenting of your sins and trusting Jesus Christ for your salvation?

Check out these words from the Christmas song ...

O Little Town of Bethlehem

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven
No ear may hear His coming
But in this world of sin*

*Where meek souls will receive him still
The dear Christ enters in*

*O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel.*

Trust him, trust him, trust him; and He will come and abide in your heart for ever.

AMEN!