

# Micah: Looking for a Shepherd



We are in Micah, exit 33 in our journey on Route 66. We are halfway down Route 66. When we are on vacation, we mark the center point of our vacation. It is my responsibility to remind the family that our vacation is half over, and they boo me because they are having so much fun. At that point, I have to rally the family to remember it is just half over. We still have another half to go and we need to finish really, really well. So though we are halfway finished, I've got good news; we have 33 more books to go.

We are going to do Micah a little differently. Normally, we use a text that just highlights the book. I believe the text we will use in this lesson tells us why this book is in the Bible. Remember that these books were originally written for the children of Israel because they were God's Old Testament covenant people. There were many other words that God spoke to the children of Israel, and not all of them made it into the Bible. When we think of why the Christian church has a Bible that has 66 books, we have to ask why God wanted this particular book to be, not only to be in the Hebrew Bible, but in our Bible. How did the book of Micah have a word for Israel, and also have a word for us? In this study of Route 66, we are trying to see how and why the story of each book fits into the big story of the Bible. Micah is loaded with truth. It is loaded with verses, so any one of us could probably pick a different verse or storyline to pursue to teach this book. But the storyline I want to show you is how I believe this book fits into the big picture of the Bible.

## **Prophecy of the Fall**

Let me give you the context. The name of the prophet Micah means 'who is like Yahweh.' He ends his book by asking the question, who is the God like Yahweh? So the book of Micah is in the Bible to show us who God is and what He is like, and to reveal to us that there is no other like Him. You see that through the things He does for His people and for the world.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. They both preached to the Southern Kingdom at the same time Hosea and Amos were preaching to the Northern Kingdom. Micah not only speaks to the Southern Kingdom, but has a message for the Northern Kingdom as well. This age (the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC) is called the Golden Age of Prophecy. Imagine Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah preaching the Word of God in a little country about 50 miles wide and 100 miles long; there is no excuse for sinning! It is not good. As a matter of fact, Micah will tell the Northern Kingdom they are going to fall to the Assyrians. It is right around the corner. He will tell Judah they are no different than Samaria, and Jerusalem will fall too. Micah will say that because of the leadership, and the lack of spiritual leadership of the country, the Southern Kingdom is also going to fall.

Now, you have to remember that Micah came from a farming region in the Southern Kingdom right on the Philistine border. So, Micah is going to use a farming analogy when talking about the sin of the princes, the priests, and the prophets. In chapter 3, the princes were skinning people alive! Can you imagine living in a society where the policy of the government was to literally skin the poor alive? The people would come to the priests, but before they would minister, the priests wanted a price. They wanted to be paid in advance! Can you imagine that? We don't like it when we go to a business and they demand something up front. Can you imagine coming to church and encountering that? The prophets were also preaching for money. The more money you gave them, the more they would tell you what you wanted to hear...wow. So, Micah tells them because of their leaders, Jerusalem is going to be plowed like a field. You know what

happens when you plow a field, right? That is what is going to happen to Jerusalem. To make sure that everyone understood the only hope of salvation was in God, Micah said there is not a godly person in the land. He said the best the land has to offer is like a thorn bush, a briar. Now, I really get agitated and irritated when I am walking through the woods and a briar grabs me, leaving its marks on me. It's such a little scratch, but it really hurts! Can you imagine the best in the land being compared to a briar or a hedge of thorn bushes? It is so bad in the land that you can't even trust your neighbor. Then Micah says to be careful what you say to your wife. You can't even trust her; it is family member against family member, son against dad, daughter against mom, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law! God ordained rulers for the nation of Israel that failed the people, and because of that, the nation is going to fall and go into exile. In the midst of the message that you can't trust your leaders, you can't trust anyone; Micah will say that our hope is in God. Then, he begins to say we are looking for a shepherd. We are looking for a ruler.

Our text will be Micah 5:2-5. We are going to exegete this passage just a little bit. I just gave you a summary of the rest of the book, but I think all of that was so that God can say what He says to Micah in chapter 5:2-5. I personally believe that God has given Micah an insight that he hasn't given the other prophets. That is why we are camping out on this passage. Guys, it is unreal what God will say to Micah in the 8<sup>th</sup> century before Christ! I hope you are ready for it.

Remember, Micah is called a minor prophet. Ask Jeremiah how minor Micah's message was, because 120 years in the future, Jeremiah will be on trial for his life because he has prophesied that Jerusalem is going to fall to the Babylonians. They are going to kill him, but some of the officials and the people who know their Bible remind them that Micah, in the day of Hezekiah, prophesied the same thing and they didn't kill him. The people actually repented and God spared the nation. Jeremiah's life was spared because of Micah. Wow! Also, in the New Testament, the wise men from the east came to Jerusalem looking for the new born King of the Jews. It

troubled the whole city when Herod realized who they are looking for, so he gathered the scribes and asked them where He, who is the Messiah, is to be born. The scribes opened to the Old Testament book of Micah, and it is that very passage of our text.

## **Scripture**

***"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
from ancient days.  
Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has given birth;  
then the rest of his brothers shall return  
to the people of Israel.  
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."***

## **The Birthplace of the Shepherd**

Wow, someone should say Hallelujah! Do you hear this? If I were to give a title to Micah, it would be 'Looking for a Shepherd.' Like the other prophets, Micah is prophesying that the Southern Kingdom will fall into the hands of the Babylonians and taken into exile, but God will not forget them. God will bring them back home. In the midst of this message of

hope, God reveals to Micah the birthplace of the Jewish Messiah. The birthplace will not be Jerusalem.

Now, let us pause just for a moment. I want to make sure you understand what is happening here in the Old Testament. When we finished the historical books, it ended with the message that they were looking for a king who will come and build the House of God. Next came the wisdom literature of Israel, and then, we began the prophetic mountain range. You have to remember that the prophets were prophesying during the historical period of Israel's existence, so Micah is prophesying during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. We know that we are looking for a king who is going to build the House of God. When the historical books end, we have the decree of Cyrus, a Persian. This is important, because the Persians have conquered the Babylonians, and one of the first things King Cyrus does is set the children of Israel free. They can leave Babylon and go back to the Promised Land, because Cyrus said he knew God wanted His house to be rebuilt. So the historical books end with this truth that the people of Israel will leave Babylon, return back to the Promised Land, and begin to build the House of God. Our prophets, up until Micah, are all saying the same thing. There will be an exile for the Southern Kingdom, the exile will end, and when they come home, they are supposed to rebuild their lives. They will be physically set free from Babylonian captivity. But God shows Micah something different. I want you to notice this, because if we were looking for a king from the line of David who is going to rebuild the House, we would expect him to be born where David's throne was, in Jerusalem. You would think the king who is coming to build the House of God would be born in Jerusalem. Instead of having the Messiah born in the big city of Jerusalem, He picks the least town of the clans of Judah, a little bitty town south of Jerusalem called Bethlehem. Isn't that just like God? Now, God starts saying, Micah, turn My people's attention to this truth that when the ruler comes, He will come from Bethlehem. Watch this; He goes on to identify Him as not just coming from Bethlehem, but coming from the days of old, coming from ancient days. Whoa, do you get it?

- **From Ancient Days**

Now, I want to say something here about the phrase, "*from of old, from ancient days*." Because that phrase is never used for man, but usually associated with God, one of the first things Christians see in this verse is that the One coming from Bethlehem will not just be a man, He will be God because His coming forth is from old, from ancient days. We know God is considered the One from ancient days. Amen? You can look at that phrase and see eternity in that, but that is not what I see. I want to give you a different view. I don't think there is any error if you take option one, but I want you to consider option two.

Up unto this point, we are looking for a king who is coming to rebuild the House of God. When we turn from the historical books to the New Testament, we suddenly realized that the House of God is not a physical building but it is the Church, the people of God. But long before the pages of the New Testament taught that, Micah saw it in the prophesy God gave him. What if the phrase, "*from of old, from ancient days*", refers back to what we learned in the beginning of our study of Route 66? Let me explain. In Micah 7:20, Micah marvels that God is a God that forgives and basically realizes that God forgives the remnant of His inheritance. You do realize that God doesn't forgive everyone. The only ones forgiven of their sins are the remnant, God's elect. He marvels that God would forgive even the remnant because their sins were so bad, so he calls on this; God will be faithful to Jacob and He will remember His steadfast love to Abraham. He talks about the oath God swore to the fathers from ancient days, days of old. In other words, Micah refers to God's covenant with Abraham as happening from the days of old.

- **The Seedline**

What I am suggesting to you is that Micah is referring to the seed line. Ancient of days, from days of old, refers to the promise God makes in the Garden of Eden when He said there would be a seed of a woman. The seed of that woman will crush the seed of the serpent. We know the New

Testament will take that promise and ultimately reveal that it is the promise of a coming Messiah who is going to crush the head of Satan and ultimately secure our salvation (Genesis 3:15). Not long after that, the seed of the woman becomes the seed of a man, and the man's name is Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3.) God's promise to Abraham was to take him, a man who had no children, and make him into a great nation. He was going to have as many children as there were stars in the sky, and one of his seed would bless all the nations of the earth. The seed of the woman who is going to crush the head of Satan is going to bring a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Then, we see that the seed of Abraham is going to run through Isaac, not Ishmael, and Jacob, not Esau. But Jacob has twelve boys, so God narrows it down to the tribe of Judah and declares Judah to be the ruling tribe. The ruler would come from the tribe of Judah, and Bethlehem is in the territory Judah! Then, God narrowed the tribe of Judah down to the seed of David. He made a promise to David that he would always have a son who sits on the throne, He would build God's House, and His kingdom will be forever. Wow!

I am suggesting the last phrase, "*from of old, from ancient days*", identifies this One who is going to be born in Bethlehem as the seed of the woman, who is the seed of Abraham, who is the seed of Isaac, who is the seed of Jacob, who is the seed of Judah, who is the seed of David. Micah is in the Bible so that we know, without a doubt, where Jesus the Messiah is going to be born! Why does the New Testament have two books tracing Jesus' birth back to Bethlehem when he was considered a Nazarene of Nazareth? It is because if Jesus Christ had been born in the north and not the south, then He couldn't have been the Messiah.

- **Israel Left in Sin Until the Messiah is Born**

Now, look at verse 3 of chapter 5. "*Therefore He shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth.*" WHOA!! The children of Israel think their exile is going to be over when Cyrus sets them free and

they go back home and start rebuilding the temple. But Micah says yes, you're going to come home from Babylon, but you will not be set free until He who is coming is born. Do you see that? Now, who is God giving up in this verse? He is giving up Israel! He is leaving them in sin. Even though He is physically going to deliver them from Babylon, their real problem, sin, (not the Babylonians, not the Assyrians) will not be dealt with until the seed comes who is to be born in Bethlehem.

The phrase, "*until the time when she who is in labor has given birth*" is not Mary. It would be really easy to see that as Mary, but it is not Mary. Micah is saying, Israel, you will fulfill your purpose as a nation. You will bring forth the Messiah, and the Messiah will be born in the little town of Bethlehem. But until then, you will remain in spiritual exile. Wow!! Do you see this? We have been looking for a king who we thought might be born in Jerusalem. Now, Micah is saying He is not going to be born in Jerusalem; He is going to be born in Bethlehem and God's people will stay in exile until the Messiah comes.

- **Gathering His Brothers and Shepherding His Flock**

Now remember, God promised Abraham that he is going to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. So in other words, when Israel gives birth to the Jewish Messiah, He is coming to save the world, not just Jews. Now look at the last half of verse 3, "*...then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.*" When does the exile end? According to Micah, the exile ends when the Messiah comes. What did He come to do? He came to die, to set us free from sin. When He accomplished that purpose, God began to gather up Jesus' brothers, His family from the four corners of the world, and they start returning to the family of God. Do you see this?

Look at what verse 4 says, "*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.*" Verse 5 says, "*And He shall be their peace.*" When the King comes, He is going to be a shepherd! He is going to take care of His flock. Jesus



would say I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd doesn't run from the wolf. He lays down His life for His sheep. He taught that His sheep know His voice. They hear Him and they follow Him. Jesus said no one can get you out of My hand! Then he said if you are in My hand, just know the Father has His hand around My hand, and no one can get you out of the Father's hand. I have come to believe that if I am in the hand of Jesus and Jesus' hand is covered by the hand of God; if we have the Holy Spirit inside us, God in us, God around us, and God around God, then why are you worried, amen?

## **Eternal Security**

Micah said to the people of God, when the shepherd who is going to be born in Bethlehem comes, and He starts bringing His people home, they never have to worry about exile again! When He stands up to feed them, to lead them, and protect them, they are secure, wow! That is why Jesus Christ, Himself, said all that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and those that come to Me, I will never cast out. You realize that, don't you? That is why Paul could say in Romans that those God foreknew He predestined, those He predestined He called, those He called He justified, and those He justified He glorified. When He defines those who have been predestined, (blue printed) He said we are "predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." Do you get this? When Jesus came, He came to gather God's children. What He brought to us, as God's children, is eternal security where we never have to worry about the enemy! Because Jesus Christ, our Messiah, completely fulfilled what the Father sent him to do, lived a life we couldn't live, went to the cross, and died a death we should have died, He secured our salvation once and for all. Micah talked about it 700 years before the fact, wow!!

Yes, our trip on Route 66 is half over. But before we get to the New Testament, God has already showed Micah that His people will be victorious because their salvation is not in them. Their salvation is in His

Son, Jesus Christ. What a book! It is a book that is going to teach there is none good on the planet, none. But, God has an inheritance. In the historical books, we might have thought that His house was a physical temple. Even in Micah chapter 4, some would have believed His house to be a physical temple. But when you put chapters 4 and 5 together, we understand that the house analogy is compared to a flock. So, the House of God that the Messiah came to build was not a physical building but a spiritual people.

When you think about being redeemed from sin, you have to remember that we were dead, spiritually separated from God, a sinner. The best we were was to be a briar. Yet, at the moment of salvation, we became a new person in Christ. As a new person in Christ, we get a new nature, a new identity, so now we can do justly. We can pursue kindness and we can walk humbly with God because of the ability that is given to us as a new person in Christ.

Please remember that Micah's name means 'who is like Yahweh.' God ordained for Israel to be like Yahweh. That is why He gave them the Law, to reveal His holiness. As they exemplified, in behavior, a different lifestyle from the pagans, the pagans were supposed to know who God is. Israel failed in their mission. In the book of Micah, God calls the nations, the mountains, and nature to witness what He is going to do, because He didn't want the nations to get the wrong idea about who He is. Do you realize what that means? Who is like Yahweh? You are supposed to be like Yahweh. I am supposed to be like Yahweh. This church is supposed to be like Yahweh. Our mission among pagans, unbelievers, is to reveal who Yahweh is. Your life is supposed to reveal that you are a brother to the Messiah. You are a son of God.