

Intro. Aren't you students glad to be done with final exams so you can enjoy your Christmas break? Some students are just happy to be finished, but some students do everything they can to boost their grade at the end of a course. A few days ago, a student emailed me to receive credit for an exam question he missed, because he said there were multiple correct answers, as he pointed me to a page in the book. I checked that page & it was talking about a different issue than the question addressed & I told him he wouldn't get credit for it. Final exams & final grades can be a time of joy for some, but a time of doom & gloom for others. Today, we look at a prophecy of Micah 5 (which I've preached before) that both the northern kingdom of Israel & the southern kingdom of Judah would be taken captive. Israel's capital of Samaria was overthrown in Micah's day in 722 BC (cf. 1:6). Jerusalem, too, would be exiled in Babylon in 586 BC (cf. 4:10). In the midst of the doom & gloom, God brought a message of hope & grace to His people—a message centering around “The Humility & Beauty of Bethlehem—In Predicting a King.”

Theme: Prophecy of the Christ

Background: Micah, like every other prophet, was given a message of judgment & hope from the Lord—judgment if the people continued in sin & hope if they turned to the Lord in faith

➤ **I want you to reflect on 5 elements of Christ's nature & the kind of King He would be & that those reflections would cause you to worship Him:**

1. Reflect on Christ's humility & worship Him (5:2)

- The fact that Christ would come from Bethlehem, a tiny town, seemingly insignificant contrasted greatly with the weak & helpless ruler of mighty Jerusalem in the previous verse

Illus: We sing Philip Brooks' hymn “O Little Town of Bethlehem” & emphasize the insignificance of the town—it was some 6 miles from Jerusalem & while it has grown, it pales in comparison to the great cities of the world

- Least among the tribes of Judah—hardly sufficient to be one province; hardly 1,000 people from the town & neighboring villages
- God uses the small & seemingly insignificant to change the course of history—the reason God uses the small is so that our boasting can't be in ourselves but only in God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

Illus: George Washington Carver, the scientist who developed hundreds of useful products from the peanut: “When I was young, I said to God, ‘God, tell me the mystery of the universe.’ But God answered, ‘That knowledge is reserved for Me alone.’ So I said, ‘God, tell me the mystery of the peanut.’ Then God said, ‘Well, George, that's more nearly your size.’ And he told me.” (adapted from Rackham Holt, George Washington Carver)

- Bethlehem is King David's hometown—David was the youngest of his family
- The NT speaks clearly to the humility of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5-8)

2. Reflect on Christ's sovereignty & worship Him (5:2, 4)

- “ruler of Israel” (5:2)—governor, sovereign
- All ancient Jewish interpreters saw this “ruler” as the Messiah
- One who will reign over a united, rather than a divided, Israel (the people of God)
- Came from Bethlehem for God (“for Me”)—represented God & His mission/purpose for the world that it is not to destroy His people (even when difficult days come) but to restore them
- The sovereignty of Christ is clear in Philippians 2:9-11 (direct allusion to Isaiah 45:23) & Revelation 19:16
- “He shall stand” (5:4)—virtually all agree that “He” deals with the coming ruler of v. 2—speaks of Christ's perseverance/endurance/stability

Illus: Historians like Arnold Toynbee tell us that the world has known 21 great civilizations, but all of them have endured only for a season—they have all passed away

Illus: God wrote on the wall to tell Belshazzar of Babylon that his reign was ending (cf. Daniel 5:26-28)

- The kingdom of Christ will not end, however, because of His stability & sovereignty & eternity (see v. 2 below)—cf. Isaiah 9:6-7; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Daniel 2:44

Illus: Handel's Messiah says “and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!”

- “He shall shepherd His flock”—compassionate care-giver, protector

- Everybody here needs a divine Shepherd & God has sent Christ for our need as the Good Shepherd (John 10)—the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:11, 15, 17-18) & keeps them secure
- Micah’s prophecy, mixed with Isaiah’s 30 years earlier, clarifies that deliverance would come out of Bethlehem by way of sacrifice
- The security of Christ’s people are wrapped up in His greatness—no greater majesty than that of the name of the LORD!
- This greatness extends to the ends of the earth—missions which take the gospel of the grace of God in Christ glorify Christ & declare His majesty
- Micah is making this prediction not when Israel is rising to power but when she is sinking toward oblivion—you can tell how firmly someone believes God’s promises by whether it gives him strength & hope when life caves in around him

3. Reflect on Christ’s deity & worship Him (5:2)

- “whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days”—literally, “from days of eternity”
- This phrase could refer to ancient origins in the line of David, but it seems to go back farther than that
- Compare Psalm 90:2—“from everlasting to everlasting, You are God”—same phrase for “from ancient days” is “from everlasting”—only God is eternal past & future
- From eternity past, before time began, Christ was with the Father (John 1:1; cf. 17:5, 24), who planned salvation for His people to be in & through Christ, even before time (1 Peter 1:19-20; Ephesians 1:4)

Illus: Last Sunday night after the choir concert, a lady pulled me aside to tell me I should have said so much more in the gospel presentation & I agreed that much more could have been said, but that the service was focused more on the music than on preaching, which is what happens each Sunday morning. As the conversation developed, it turned to the Lordship & deity of Christ & she said she didn’t believe He is God. When I pointed out several texts which affirms it & the 200+ references to Him as Lord, the same title used for God the Father, she said she would look into it—if you don’t believe Christ is God in the flesh, then you have missed out on the central message of the Bible—He is Immanuel, God with us

4. Reflect on Christ’s humanity & worship Him (5:3)

- One in labor gives birth—either refers to Mary’s bearing of Jesus or a reference to Bethlehem or Israel—either way, it speaks of the One to come & His humanity
- NT authors confirm Jesus’ birth & humanity (Matthew 1:16ff; Luke 2:7; John 1:14; Galatians 4:4)
- “rest of His brothers”—not just Jews, but the brothers of Christ—Christians

Illus: Christians have affirmed for 2,000 years the full deity & humanity of Jesus Christ—only One fully divine could conquer death & forgive our sins & only One fully human could stand in our place for our sins

5. Reflect on Christ’s tranquility & worship Him (5:5)

- “He shall be their peace”—world peace will never come unless the world is converted to Christ or when He returns (cf. Luke 2:14)
- Only through faith in Christ do we have peace with God (Romans 5:1)

Conc. Many of you are familiar with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, set in the late Medieval Ages in Paris during the reign of Louis XI, but you probably know Disney’s version. Quasimodo, the hunchback who lives in the cathedral tower at Notre Dame, fights for & rescues the gypsy Esmeralda from the clutches of her tormenters. But he is tricked in the end to giving her over to her phony husband & she is hanged for witchcraft & causing rioting. Quasimodo spends the remainder of his days at her grave & he dies of starvation there. 18 months later, their graves are opened & when they try to separate their skeletons, they crumble into dust—the story is about humility & beauty & more. “The Humility & Beauty of Bethlehem” is not just about a tiny town in Israel but it’s also about the humility of Christ, who left His throne in heaven to take on flesh & walk in our shoes & be our sin’s sacrifice. But the storyline of Scripture also highlights the beauty of Christ who is God in the flesh, our Redeemer & Lord & Savior & hope of the world, because He lives! This message also relates to each person here. If you will humble yourself & confess your sins & dependence on the Lord, He will forgive you & begin to transform you along with the rest of His body as a beautiful bride, His church.