

# Micah

## Chapter 5

*The Ruler to Be Born in Bethlehem*

**Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. 2 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. 3 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. 4 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. 5 And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; 6 they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border.**

**5:1** Jerusalem will be besieged, and her kings will be seized and taken to Babylon (the last king, Zedekiah, was blinded; see 2Ki 25:7). (CSB)

*O daughter of troops.* Pictures Jerusalem as a military base. (TLSB)

*siege is laid.* Cf 4:11.(TLSB)

*judge of Israel.* The king, not God's appointed judge. (TLSB)

*strike ... on the cheek.* Insult emphasizing the king's helplessness (Ps 3:7; Lm 3:30). (TLSB)

**5:2** In contrast to the dire prediction of v. 1, Micah shifts to a positive note. (CSB)

*but you* – The Lord addressed this wonderful promise of a future ruler to a people and king whose situation seemed hopeless. (TLSB)

*Bethlehem* – Birthplace of David and Jesus, 18 mi NE of Moresheth, Micah's hometown (1:1). See color map 1. When the Wise Men came to Jerusalem seeking the king of the Jews, they were directed to Bethlehem based on this passage. (TLSB)

*Ephrathah.* The region in which Bethlehem was located (see Ru 1:2; 4:11; 1Sa 17:12). (CSB)

City or region associated with Bethlehem. Jacob's wife Rachel was buried here (Gn 35:19). (TLSB)

Bethlehem had a notable history. Benjamin, the son of Jacob was born near the town; his mother Rachel was buried here. Ruth gleaned the fields of Boaz at Bethlehem; here King David was born. Yet Bethlehem had remained a small town, too small to be named among the more than 100 cities belonging to the clans of Judah (Joshua 15:20ff). (PBC)

The Messiah is to be born not in Jerusalem, the residential city of David, but in the little town of Bethlehem. That presupposes that David's line had lost the ruler-ship over Israel, lost the throne. When this prophecy shall be fulfilled, the house of David shall have become quite insignificant and lowly. But such conditions could only be possible, if the people have become subject to the power of the enemy. (Stoekhardt)

*clans of Judah* – Clan meant 1000. (PBC)

Ephrathites were a small clan in the tribe of Judah (Ru 1:2). (TLSB)

*for me* – Promise of a ruler accords with the Lord's own saving purpose. (TLSB)

*ruler*. Ultimately Christ, who will rule for God the Father. (CSB)

The physical kingdom of Israel would not be restored. This would be a spiritual kingdom. (CSB)

*coming forth is from of old*. His beginnings were much earlier than his human birth (see Jn 8:58). (CSB)

Origin of Israel's famous King David, born three centuries before Micah's day, was somewhat ancient. But the promised Ruler's origin was even more ancient, because He was begotten of the Father from eternity. Luth: "He does not come forth first from Bethlehem after the Babylonian captivity but came forth a long time ago already. This is just the way John describes the divinity of Christ (John 1:1): 'In the beginning was the Word.' In his song, Ps. 90:2, Moses sings: 'From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.' There Moses used the same expression that Micah uses here, that is: 'You did not begin with the world, but, when the world began to be, You already were.' Christ also says about Himself: 'Before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:58)" (AE 18:248). (TLSB)

*from ancient days*. Within history (cf. 2Sa 7:12–16; Isa 9:6–7; Am 9:11), and even from eternity. (CSB)

The Father's will and purpose from eternity was made manifest in the coming of the Prince of Peace. And even as His outgoings were from eternity, since He is the everlasting Son of the Father, so His generation as man is from Bethlehem, for as a true human being He became subject to time and permitted Himself, as a rule, to be governed by the limitations of space as well. (Kretzmann)

**5:3 THEREFORE** – (laken) points back to verse 1. Because the Ruler shall proceed from that little Bethlehem, for that reason Israel shall be subject to hostile power. (Stoekhardt)

Before the promised Ruler would be born, God's people were left to suffer at the hands of their enemies. (TLSB)

Because Israel, the people of the Lord, is to be redeemed not by his own power, but by the gracious gift of the Messiah. (Kretzmann)

*shall give them up*. Until the Messiah is born and begins his rule. (CSB)

Abandoned (nathan) here means to hand over, to yield to, to surrender into the hands of the enemy. The subject is God. It is God who gives this people into the hands of the enemies. (Stoekhardt)

*she* – Refers to Mary. The One whom her labor brought forth healed the pain of the daughter of Zion (4:9–10). (TLSB)

*return to the people of Israel* – For at that time the Lord would bring together from the various nations of the world those whom He intended to add to His true Israel, to His spiritual nation. The humiliation of the house of David and of Israel had been included in the plan of God, but the final result would be that the Messiah, like His ancestor David, would go forth from the humble city of Bethlehem. To this end it was necessary for the people to remain under the rule of the enemies (Kretzmann)

Spiritual return of all Israel, all believers (Rm 11:26). (TLSB)

**5:4** *he shall stand and shepherd his flock* – The word pictures the shepherd as standing there erect, watching over his flock. There He stands leaning a bit on His staff, while quietly watching His sheep. At the same time there is an indication that His station as Ruler is firm and that His rule is unyielding and will not permit disturbance or interference. Yet there is no note of harshness in His rule. (Stoekhardt)

Imagery of the king guiding and protecting his people was common (2:12; 4:6–8; Ezk 34:1–24). (TLSB)

*strength ... majesty*. The Messiah will shepherd and rule in the strength and majesty of God the Father. (CSB)

Qualities attributed to kings are here described as coming from the Lord. (TLSB)

That cannot be said of any mere human ruler. No human ruler is so closely united with Jehovah that he could claim all majesty and power of God as his own. (Stoekhardt)

Qualities attributed to kings are here described as coming from the Lord. (TLSB)

*dwelt secure* – As the Good Shepherd he knows his sheep by name, and gives his life for them. (PBC)

*ends of the earth* – All nations will ultimately recognize and acknowledge the authority of the Lord, and so there will be peace and security for the Lord's people (Phil 2:10-11; Rev. 11:15). (TLSB)

**5:5** *their peace*. Jesus is “our peace” (Eph 2:14). In addition to freedom from war, the Hebrew word for “peace” also connotes prosperity in the OT. (CSB)

The Messiah is the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6; Lk 2:14). (TLSB)

Jesus' atoning death made peace between God and us guilty sinners. (PBC)

That means He Himself will be the personification of peace for men. He brings about peace by Himself and so also becomes peace to those whom He calls His own. Similarly St. Paul writes

Eph 2:24: “For He is our peace.” It is for that reason that Isaiah, a contemporary of Micah, calls the Messiah “the Prince of Peace.” Is. 9:6. Even Jacob already calls the coming Messiah “Shilo,” Gen 49:10. Peace belongs to the very character of the Messiah and that trait is found in all His descriptions and that of His kingdom. Thus the Messiah is the real Solomon, whose name is a reflection of “Shalom” (peace). This NT Solomon provides peace for His people in a far higher and fuller sense than once did that man Solomon at his time. (Stoekhardt)

**5:5 Assyrian.** Symbolic of all the enemies of God’s people in every age. See Isa 11:11; Zec 10:10–11. (CSB)

Micah’s contemporaries responded to God’s promise of a ruler by boasting of their ability to defeat this powerful nation located some 500 mi NE. In 701 BC, the Assyrian army under King Sennacherib invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem (2Ki 18:13–17). (TLSB)

*we.* The people of God. (CSB)

*seven ... eight.* A figurative way of saying “many.” (CSB)

Not meant as precise figures but to suggest a fairly large number of military leaders. (TLSB)

**5:6 land of Nimrod.** Assyria. See Ge 10:8–11. (CSB)

Name of this “mighty man” was applied to Assyria. (TLSB)

*he.* The ruler of v. 2. (CSB)

*entrances.* Troop movements at the borders would be blocked. (TLSB)

*he shall deliver us.* Micah’s hearers understood that the promised Ruler (v 2) would assure earthly victory. They failed to foresee that this Ruler was coming to deliver them from all spiritual enemies. (TLSB)

**5:1–6** The Lord did not guarantee that the city of Jerusalem would escape capture, but He did promise a ruler from the house of David who would bring lasting peace and security. The Lord has not promised us victory over all our earthly enemies, but He has given us victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil through Jesus, the Son of David, born at Bethlehem in “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4). He is our mighty fortress (LSB 656). • “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 15:57). Alleluia! (TLSB)

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**Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border.**

**5:7 remnant** – The spiritual Israel. (Kretzmann)

*midst of many peoples* – Literally, "in the midst of the abundance of the nations."

*like dew* – Through the gospel they proclaim by word and deed Christians everywhere shower the refreshing grace of God upon the barren hearts of men, that they might become fruitful branches growing out of Christ the Vine. But dew and rain do not wait for man. Man must make use of them when they are present, or like a passing shower they will be gone. (PBC)

Just as dew and showers are not dependent on human initiative, but are God's doing, so it is God's plan to disperse His people among the nations. (TLSB)

**5:8 lion.** Like the previous simile (v. 7) this pictures the inevitable progress of the people of God toward triumph over their enemies (v. 9). (CSB)

Symbol of ferocious strength, esp of God's power over the nations (Is 31:4; Hos 11:10). See note, Am 1:2. God's people share in His power and are triumphant in the midst of their foes (Lk 10:19; 12:32). (TLSB)

*treads down and tears in pieces* – Micah had previously mentioned how the church defends itself against all enemies by the sword of the Word (vv 6 & 6). Now he refers to the negative effect of the church's proclamation of the Word. Where the dew and the rain of gospel have been ignored or rejected, there the church must proclaim God's law, thundering down like a storm with judgment and death: "He who does not believe will be damned" (Mark 16:16). That is certain and eternal death from which no one can rescue. (PBC)

**5:10–14** In the Messianic era the people of God will not depend on weapons of war or pagan idols. The successes of his people are always achieved by dependence on him. (CSB)

These verses mention all the things that Judah had placed their trust. All of them had proved to be useless and so they need to be swept away.

**5:10 cut off.** The Lord will rid His people of all implements of war because they will not be needed when the Messiah reigns (v 5; Zec 9:10). (TLSB)

**5:12 sorceries ... tellers of fortunes.** Attempts to manipulate divine power according to human will. (TLSB)

**5:13 carved images.** Represented deities such as Baal, set up in shrines and high places, that even Israelites had worshiped. (TLSB)

**5:14 Asherah.** Canaanite vegetation goddess and wife of Baal. Asherah images were usually wooden posts or trees that were seen as access points to the favorable presence of the goddess. (TLSB)

**5:15 did not obey** – Rather, "who have not heard," who refuse to accept the rule of the Messiah. Concerning the progress of prophecy as evident from this chapter it is well to remember the words of one commentator: "The promise of the Redeemer at first was vaguely general. Gen. 3,

15. Then the Shemitic division of mankind was declared as the quarter in which He was to be looked for, Gen. 9, 26. 27; then it grew clearer, defining the race and nation whence the Deliverer should come - the seed of Abraham, the Jews, Gen. 12,3; then the particular tribe, Judah, Gen. 49, 10; then the very town of His birth, here." (Kretzmann)

**5:7–15** The Lord is with His holy remnant (Is 4:3), even when we live in the midst of our enemies. We need not depend on human strength or seek help and direction from some other “divine” being. If we do, we are sure to falter and fail. When we take the Lord at His Word and depend on His might, we will be secure and at peace. God remains present with us even when we feel utterly abandoned to forces beyond our control, such as sickness and death. He uses such times to cleanse us from unbelief and lead us to a deeper trust in Christ Jesus. • Thank You, Father, for always being with me no matter where I find myself in life. Through Your Word and Sacrament, strengthen my faith in Jesus, and make me confident of Your help. Amen. (TLSB)