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The Fall of Damascus

Life in Ocala, FL

Dear Friends,

Christmas is one of our favorite times of the year. Family, festivities, food and fun are part of the season.

The central part of this season, for Bible believing Christians is the Messiah. This season remembers the birth of Jesus. Whether Jesus was born in December or not should not destroy the joy of this season.

Micah 5:2 is an amazing prophecy of the birth of Messiah Jesus in Bethlehem.

What may surprise many people is that the context of this amazing prophecy of the birthplace of the Messiah puts this promise in the context of the second coming and is meant to be a message of hope for the people of Israel.

I have taught on this passage often, especially at this time of year (and when in Bethlehem on my many trips to Israel).

Instead of writing an article on Micah 5:2, I have provided my outline I use when teaching this verse. May it be a blessing and help you dig deeper into this prophecy.

Have a blessed Christmas and a fruitful 2025 for our Lord.

Mark and Cheryl

THE HOPE OF THE KING - MICAH 5:2

A. Background of Micah 5:2

1. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah.

2. They both prophesied in shadow of the Assyrian invasion.

3. The political (3:1,9) and spiritual leaders (3:5) were evil

Chose evil over good - 3:2

Promised peace when there was none - 3:5

Driven by greed - 3:11

Hypocrisy - 3:11b

Judgment promised - 3:12

4. Hope for the future promised - 4:1-7

a. Jerusalem will be the center of Messianic rule - vs. 1-2

b. Peace will be on the earth - vs. 3-4

c. Verse 5 needs to be understood in the context of the first four verses. In the first 2 verses nations will go to Jerusalem and worship and follow the God of Israel. Verse 3 speaks of the process where God judges and separates those who don't follow Jehovah, Jesus, (i.e. Matthew 25:31-46) and verse 4 speaks of the universal peace that reigns. Verse 5 speaks of the two groups of people that are judged at the end of the Tribulation, not who are in the millennium. Those who "walk every one in the name of his god" will be sent to "everlasting punishment" and those who "walk in the name of the LORD our God" go "into life eternal," Matthew 25:46.

d. "In that day," verse 6, places these verses in the millennium. The lame, verse 7, as Isaiah 35:1-6 states, will be healed in Messiah's kingdom.

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.

B. Context of Micah 5:2

1. Context begins at Micah 4:8: "O, thou, tower of the flock...unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion."
 - a. The site mentioned as "tower of the flock" (migdal edar in Hebrew), according to Jerome was 1,000 paces from Bethlehem. It is mentioned in Genesis 35:21.
 - b. The Talmud (Shekalim 7.4) states that Migdal Edar was where lambs were raised for Passover.
 - c. Targum Jonathan states: "This is the place where, in the last days, Messiah will be revealed."
 - d. This site is identified as Bethlehem in 5:2 ("and thou"). See 1 Samuel 16:11,12.
 - e. Here shepherds received the announcement of Messiah's birth. (Luke 2:8 ff)
 - f. The "first" or "former" dominion will be restored as the descendant of David arrives there. The word memshalah ("dominion") related to word mashal ("ruler") in 5:2.
2. The collapse of the monarchy and the exile. (4:9-13)
 - a. Babylonian siege and captivity - 4:9-10
 - b. Worldwide captivity implied between verse 10 and 11
 - c. Tribulation siege when Israel will defeat her enemies by the power of God - 4:11-13
 - 1) Many nations gather against Israel - 4:11 (Rev. 16:14-16; Zech. 12:2-3)
 - 2) Anti-Semitism is the driving force - 4:11b
3. The siege against Jerusalem and the smiting of the "judge of Israel...upon the cheek" (cf. Micah 5:1; Zedekiah; Lamentations 3:30).
 - a. Probably not Babylonian siege and destruction because a Judge will be struck and there was a King at this time.
 - b. Probably not the Tribulation siege because that is referenced in 5:3 where the oft used illustration for the last days of "labor pains" is used.
 - c. This siege is likely the Roman siege of 70 A.D.

C. Exegesis of Micah 5:2

1. This verse is a positive parenthesis between 5:1 and 3, introducing a reminder of hope that not all is lost - a Ruler will come as the Shepherd King.
2. "Bethlehem Ephrath"
 - a. Ephrath: "fruitful" and parallels meaning of Bethlehem ("house of bread"); it was an ancient name for this town (Genesis 35:19; Ruth 1:2).
 - b. Added to distinguish from other Bethlehem (Joshua 19:15).
3. "little among thousands of Judah"
 - a. "Thousands" equals "districts" - each tribe was originally divided into districts of 1,000 each (Numbers :16; 10:4; 1 Samuel 23:23).
 - b. Not even mentioned in Joshua's listing of towns of Judah. (Joshua 15)
4. "out of thee...ruler in Israel"
 - a. "come forth to me" - to do God's work and will
 - b. Bethlehem was town of royal line (David - 1 Samuel 16)

c. Can't refer to David since Micah prophesied 250 years after David died.

d. Traditional Jewish interpretation is that this is the "messianic-King:"

1) Ancient scribes affirmed this. (Matthew 2:4-6)

2) Common people affirmed this. (John 7:41-42)

3) Ancient Jewish sources confirm this.

"Although thou art little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall come forth unto me a Judge to be Ruler in Israel, and this is the King Messiah." Rabbi David Kimchi

5. "whose goings forth...from of old, from everlasting"

a. The word "goings forth" (motsaot) comes from the same root as "come forth" (yatsa).

b. "Goings forth" refers to his activities and ministries, not his origins (NIV is a poor translation).

c. "From everlasting" is the same wording used for God. (Habakkuk. 1:12; Psa. 90:2; 93:2)

1) In time, He came from Bethlehem - His humanity

2) Beyond time, He came from eternity - His Deity

D. Micah 5:3 resumes thought of 5:1. The captivity will take place and last until the "birth pains of the Messiah."

The promise of Micah 5:2 parallels Isaiah 7:14 which speaks of the virgin birth and gives the name of the child as Immanuel ("God with us" - Isaiah 8:8, 10 also speak of "God with us") and Isaiah 9:6 (God is with us in "a child born" - His humanity - and "a son given" - His deity). Micah 5:2 is a message of hope to a nation led by sinful, rebellious political and spiritual leaders. There is a righteous King coming, One who is both God and Man, Who will establish justice and peace and be "God with us."

Mark preached this message on December 15, 2024 and can be watched at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jzq_Xg3Zmu8. It is archived at www.friendshipbaptistocalafl.org under LIVESTREAM.

Life & Outreach in Ocala, FL



Master the Possibilities

Mark has one class scheduled for the Spring 2025 semester on *"There Really Is A Difference: Understanding Dispensational and Covenant Theology."*

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS WITH FAMILY AT WORLD EQUESTRIAN CENTER IN OCALA



THE FALL OF DAMASCUS

“The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.” Isaiah 17:1

The world has been caught by surprise with the rapid fall of the regime of Bashar al-Assad of Syria. Assad was a ruthless leader who killed half a million or more of his citizens and imprisoned and tortured thousands. He won't be missed. Assad's regime was overrun by Jihadists. If their ideology guides their rule, which is likely, the future for the people of Syria is no better, if not worse, than under Assad.

Israel, in the short term, though, will have a much safer position. With the downfall of Assad, Israel used the temporary leadership vacuum to destroy 80% of the military arms. *World Israel News* reports:

“More than 350 Israeli fighter jets took part in Operation “Bashan's Arrow” to neutralize military sites once controlled by the Assad regime, which fell to rebel fighters.

Among the targets were advanced military systems such as tanks, fighter jets, helicopters, air defense systems, missile-equipped ships, rockets, arms manufacturing facilities, munitions storage sites, Scud missiles, cruise missiles, coastal defense missiles, drones, and various other weaponry.

In addition, the IDF struck at a Scud missile manufacturing site in the Homs area.”

The demise of the Assad rule, HAMAS and Hezbollah being decimated by Israel, and Iran, after Israel's October 26 attack, being exposed as more bark than bite, brings a new dynamic to the Middle East. Although Israel still has its issues, such as the terrorist Palestinian Authority located in Judea and Samaria, the future for Israel looks as secure and peaceful as it ever has.

The future invasion of Israel described for us in Ezekiel 38-39 requires Israel to be dwelling safely. The Russian led invasion of Israel comes against a nation at peace and dwelling securely.

And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates. Ezekiel 38:11

With this invasion occurring prior to the middle of the seven year Tribulation period, perhaps today's world events are setting the stage for this invasion. When the Anti-Christ orchestrates a seven year peace agreement between Israel and her enemies, Daniel 9:27, Israel will be at the place that verse 11 speaks of.

But what becomes of Syria and her capital Damascus? According to Isaiah 17:1; destruction. When, though, will this occur? Many commentators place this event with the destruction of Damascus by Assyria in 732 B.C. The problem, as many commentators note, is that Damascus did not become a “ruinous heap” at this time. I believe it is best to place this destruction in the future seven year Tribulation period. Let me explain why I believe this to be the case.

The context and the flow of the book suggests this event to be in the Tribulation period. There are 2 main themes in Isaiah's book. Salvation, Isaiah 1:18, and the Kingdom, Isaiah 2:1-4. The flow of the book develops these two themes.

Chapters 7 - 12 of Isaiah have been referred to as “The Book of Immanuel,” as Victor Buksbazen does in his heading for these 6 chapters in his Isaiah commentary. The promise of Immanuel, meaning “God is with us,” in 7:14, 8:8,10 and 9:6 sees its fulfillment in the second coming of Jesus when His kingdom is established on earth and He reigns as “God with us,” Isaiah 11 -12.

Chapters 13 - 39 are parenthetical in Isaiah. The comfort spoken of in Isaiah 12:1 with God in the midst of Israel is picked up again in chapter 40 verse 1 when we are told “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” People are comforted when they have the salvation provided by God through Messiah, Isaiah 53.

With Israel in her promised Messianic kingdom, chapters 11-12, it is logical to ask what about the nations? Chapters 13 - 27 deal with the future plight of the nations. It begins with the nations around Israel but extends to all the nations of the world. Chapter 13 speaks of Babylon but it is clearly addressing the end time events of the Tribulation period. Verse 6 says, “Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.” Continue reading and the events taking place are during the “Day of the Lord,” which begins at the start of the 7 year Tribulation period.

This section of God's dealing with the nations culminates in Isaiah 24-27 which have been described as a mini-Apocalypse (Book of Revelation). In these chapters the entire earth is judged by God, “Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof,” Isaiah 24:1.

Prior to God's judgment on the earth and all its inhabitants God specifically deals with His judgment on particular nations. The context, starting with chapter 13 and culminating with chapters 24-27, I believe, puts the judgment of all these nations in the “Day of the Lord.” Thus, Damascus' ruin is still future, but perhaps very soon.