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# From Promise to Parousia

## The Ruler

### Micah 5v1-6

#### **Introduction**

In 1945, as the Japanese were driven out of the Korean Peninsula, the Russians moved in to take their place. The Americans didn't want the Russians controlling the whole country, so took over the Southern half. A country which had previously been one was now split. 75 years later we still have North and South Korea, and they're very different countries. South Korea is a technology powerhouse. If you have a Samsung phone, an LG television or a Hyundai car, they were designed and built in South Korea. In contrast, North Korea is a strict communist dictatorship, extremely poor and couldn't be more different from the south. How did this happen?

The main reason is the rulers that have run the countries, and the decisions they have made which affected their peoples. There is still a lot of tension between them and some families are still separated from each other from when the countries split.

Broken relationships between countries like North and South Korea, or Northern and Southern Ireland, or even the religious divides within Glasgow, are often a cause of strife and hurt. We long for someone to take charge and unify people.

#### **Background to Micah**

This is the position Micah found himself in. God had kept his promise to Abraham, and given him both a place and a people. But the people had rebelled, the country had split and now there was a northern kingdom of Israel, with its capital at Samaria, and a southern kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as capital.

And the rulers weren't great. The Bible tells us that the kings of the northern kingdom were wicked without exception. The southern kings were a bit better. It was 50/50 whether they got a positive or negative review.

But even amongst all the failure by the Israelites, God was keeping his promises. The bloodline of David continued on the throne in Jerusalem.

#### **Micah's Message**

And so Micah's message from God was a condemnation on both the north and the south. Samaria! You're going to be destroyed. Jerusalem! You're going to be destroyed. But there was some good news among it all. As Micah looked along the line of coming kings he saw a cutting off, as Judah would be defeated and taken into exile in Babylon. However they would

return, they would become strong, and as Micah strained his prophetic vision he saw a ruler, one who would restore, unify and lead his people to strength and victory.

What would this ruler be like?

## Humble

The big surprise in Micah 5v2 is that the ruler won't come from the Jewish capital, Jerusalem, but from a small town nearby. The verse tells us Bethlehem isn't big enough to be counted among the clans of Judah, and yet this great ruler will come out from it.

*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. [Micah 5 v 2]*

We've heard about Bethlehem before. In our studies on Ruth it was the home town of Naomi, and so it was the place where Obed, Jesse and then David were born. When we sing about "Royal David's City" it sounds like a grand place, but in fact it was much more humble.

Now, in case we think we might just be looking back in the old testament and finding any old verse that mentions Bethlehem, because Jesus was born there, remember when the wise men appeared before King Herod, he was troubled by their news of a king of the Jews.

*assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet" [Matthew 2 v 4-5]*

So the Jewish leaders at the time knew that Bethlehem was the place where the promised king, the Messiah, was to be born.

When we learn about the situation of Jesus' birth it was even more humble than the little town. Born in a dirty stable to parents who were homeless doesn't seem like how the king of heaven should come to earth. And yet this is how he chose to show us that he was lowering himself for our sake. His whole life was marked with humility, and even his great entrance into Jerusalem, being hailed as king by the people, was on the back of a donkey. Just as predicted by Zechariah:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey. [Zechariah 9 v 9]*

## Mighty

Despite being a humble ruler he is also a mighty ruler. V4 tells us:

*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. [Micah 5 v 4]*

This is a ruler who will come with great power, who will strengthen the nation of Israel. Further down in verse 8 Micah tells us:

*And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations,  
in the midst of many peoples,  
like a lion among the beasts of the forest,  
like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, [Micah 5 v 8]*

This picture of the lion echoes the blessings of Jacob, way back in Genesis 49. He blessed his sons one by one and when he got to Judah he compared his tribe to a lion. Much later on when John was shown his revelations he is told:

*behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. [Revelation 5 v 5]*

So Jesus, the Root of David, is the Lion of Judah. He is a leader strong to face any foe. Jesus displayed his power time and time again, as he healed illness, commanded nature, even raised the dead.

## Unifying

As we thought about countries split in two, and the need for someone to come along and unify the people to heal the nation, we see we need a unifying ruler.

Ezekiel is an amazing book. Often he would do something as an object lesson to teach the people a truth. Ezekiel was among the exiled Jews in Babylon, he was living through what Micah had prophesied, but he believed they would return. And he believed the scattered Jews would one day become a unified nation again. In Ezekiel chapter 37, Ezekiel takes two sticks and writes on them the names of the northern and southern kingdoms. He then holds the two sticks together in his hand as one stick, telling the people that God is going to bring his people together again, under a unifying ruler:

*Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. [Ezekiel 37 v 21-22]*

Who is this leader going to be? Ezekiel quotes the Lord:

*My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where*

*your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. [Ezekiel 37 v 24-25]*

Of course King David had already come and gone. When the Lord says David will be king over them he is talking about the future descendent of David who we hear about time and time again, the Root of David mentioned in Revelation. Jesus will be the great unifying leader.

## Righteous

Now we've seen from our examples that bad leaders can cause devastation to their countries. It's important that this ruler to come is going to be a righteous ruler, who will make right choices and lead the people in a Godly way. Zechariah has already told us he will be righteous:

*Behold, your king is coming to you;*

*righteous and having salvation is he, [Zechariah 9 v 9]*

But Jeremiah also had a message about the promised king. He was another prophet living through the devastating times of the sacking of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews to Babylon. Unlike Ezekiel he stayed in Jerusalem. He saw many horrors, and yet he still believed that God would restore them. Here's what he wrote in Jeremiah 23:

*Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.' [Jeremiah 23 v 5-6]*

What a name to be given! There is a passage in Genesis when Abraham has won a battle and a mysterious figure appears, called Melchizedek. His name means King of Righteousness, and when the writer to the Hebrews wants to explain how much greater Jesus is than all others he recalls this fellow and gives his title to Jesus: King of Righteousness.

## Eternal

It would be a shame to have such an amazing king and yet for his reign to be short. In fact if this ruler is to be humble, mighty, unifying and righteous, wouldn't it be great if he could just reign forever? And such is God's plan for his Son.

Micah said it in the previous chapter, 4v6:

*In that day, declares the Lord,*

*I will assemble the lame*

*and gather those who have been driven away*

*and those whom I have afflicted;*

*and the lame I will make the remnant,*

*and those who were cast off, a strong nation;*

*and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion*

*from this time forth and forevermore. [Micah 4 v 6-7]*

And we have those famous verses from Isaiah which are often quoted at Christmas time:

*For to us a child is born,*

*to us a son is given;*

*and the government shall be upon his shoulder,*

*and his name shall be called*

*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,*

*Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and of peace*

*there will be no end,*

*on the throne of David and over his kingdom,*

*to establish it and to uphold it*

*with justice and with righteousness*

*from this time forth and forevermore.*

*The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. [Isaiah 9 v 6-7]*

Right from the very beginning of the nation of Israel, God had promised to Abraham that he would make him a blessing to all nations, that he would establish a kingdom that would last forever, that a king would reign eternally. And as Abraham, and Micah, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Zechariah looked forward to the time this would come, we also look back to the fulfilment of all these promises. We see a stable, a manger, a baby, and a new star in the sky, announcing the birth of the king.

- The Humble King
- The Mighty King
- The Unifying King
- The Righteous King
- The Eternal King

### **Application**

In all this we have to ask the question: who would he be a ruler of? The scriptures talk about Israel, but there is more to it than that. When Jesus came it was to the Jews first but also to the gentiles. He will eventually rule a physical kingdom, but more than that he rules a spiritual kingdom, of all who will bow the knee to him. He seeks to be our ruler. He wants us to be his kingdom. When he came to this world at Bethlehem, he didn't come to take over a country, but to claim a people. And since his death and resurrection we have been enabled to be part of that kingdom.

- He humbled himself to take on humanity, and then even to death
- He was mighty to save and declared the truth of that in rising from the grave
- He offers us a unifying reconciliation with God the Father, by cleansing our sins
- He lived a righteous life and then put his righteousness on all who believe on him
- Not only will he reign eternally but he gave us the chance to live eternally in his presence

As Christmas approaches, let's celebrate the ruler who was promised from the beginning,  
*whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*