



8

The Coming Ruler

Key Theme

- God's plan of redemption was in place before time.

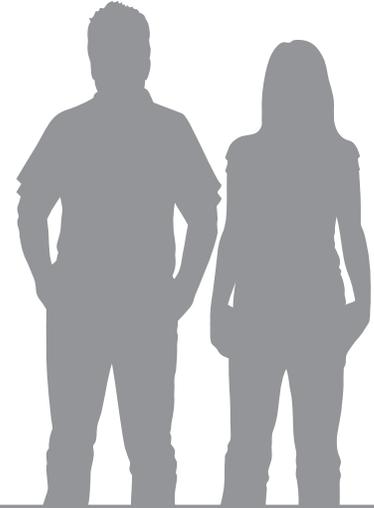
Key Passages

- Micah 5:1–9, 7:18–20; 1 Peter 2:20–25

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect the prophecy in Micah to the person of Jesus.
- Explain how God deals with our sins.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, "Did Micah predict the birthplace of the Messiah?"



Studying God's Word

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God had always planned that He would send a Savior to redeem fallen man. This plan is seen throughout the Old Testament and included Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be born a man, live, die, and rise again so that all who would believe would be saved.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read the lesson Key Passages.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Micah's Prophecies

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Students will examine other passages of Scripture that point out the fulfillment of four Messianic prophecies in Micah 5.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

The gospel—the good news of the redemption of sinners through the promised Messiah—is woven like a scarlet thread throughout the Bible, like an arrow pointing to something wonderful that would surely come to fulfillment. As we look at the prophet Micah, we will see that he was one of the prophets of God who had the privilege of announcing the coming Messiah.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, ministering to both Israel to the north and Judah to the south. He preached in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. His message concerned what he saw regarding Samaria and Jerusalem (Micah 1:1). He prophesied from around 760 to 710 BC. His proclamations and warnings were being sounded as Samaria fell to the Assyrians to the north in 721 BC.

Although Micah pronounced judgment on the people for their mistreatment of the poor (Micah 2:2), for false teachers (Micah 2:6), and for idolatry, he also spoke with hope of a light that would shine brightly into the future—a time when people would walk in the name of the Lord God forever and ever (Micah 4:5). His message of the future included revelations of the Messiah, the Savior—who He was and how He would be identified.

Let's look specifically at Micah 5:2. We see four characteristics here regarding the coming Messiah. First, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Second, the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Third, the Messiah would be eternal. And fourth, in Micah 5:4, the Messiah would act as a shepherd who would feed His flock. These prophecies were all fulfilled, and God confirmed the fulfillment of them in other parts of Scripture.

The first part of the prophecy, that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, is confirmed in several places in the New Testament writings. We read that Joseph went up from Nazareth with Mary, his betrothed wife who was with child, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (Luke 2:4–5). Luke also recorded that the angels brought good tidings to the shepherds that a

Savior was born in the city of David—Bethlehem (Luke 2:10–12). So 700 years after Micah foretold the Messiah's birthplace, the Savior was born in Bethlehem.

The second thing Micah told about the Messiah (Micah 5:2) was that He would be from the tribe of Judah. We'll go back in the Old Testament to see one confirmation of this prophecy. When Jacob blessed his sons and grandsons, the connection between this coming Ruler and the tribe of Judah was made. Jacob spoke of the scepter—a sign of kingship—not departing from Judah until Shiloh comes, the Ruler who will bring peace (Genesis 49:8–10). The author of Hebrews declared that the Lord arose from Judah (Hebrews 7:14). Looking forward to the book of Revelation, we read that Jesus the Messiah is referred to as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (Revelation 5:5). And finally, both genealogies of Christ show that He was from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38).

The third characteristic described by Micah is the Messiah's eternality—His “goings forth are from old, from everlasting.” Micah, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, revealed that the Messiah was and is eternal. This is surely a difficult concept to grasp. Jesus, as part of the Trinity, did not begin to exist when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He existed in triune communion with the Father and the Spirit before the universe was created—before there was time. The Apostle John opens his Gospel with confirmation of this truth about the Messiah. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1–2). Micah understood that the Messiah would be from everlasting to everlasting.

Fourthly, Micah described the Messiah as a shepherd who would “stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord” (Micah 5:4). The shepherd imagery of God and Jesus is found throughout Scripture (Psalm 23). And Jesus even referred to Himself as the “good shepherd” who gave His life for His sheep (John 10:11).

All of these characteristics of Jesus the Messiah are wonderful, and the Bible's confirmation of them gives us the assurance that Jesus Christ is the one prophesied by Micah.

One final truth from Micah about the Messiah is truly remarkable and very personal. Micah proclaimed that God would pardon iniquity and pass over the transgressions of His children. He would not retain His anger forever. He delights in mercy. God would have compassion on His children and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18–20). How would this be accomplished? Only through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Peter described this in the New Testament when he said that Christ “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

While Micah was looking forward to this Messiah and prophesying of Him by the power of God, we are able to look back and observe His finished work on the Cross—salvation and forgiveness for all who will repent, turn from their sins, and trust in this precious Messiah, Savior, Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As we consider the role of the prophet, we often come across the word “predict.” What comes to mind when you hear that someone made a prediction? Maybe you have made a prediction about who would win a contest or about when it would rain. What was that prediction based on? Would it be accurate to say that Micah made a prediction about the birthplace of Christ?

If we look up the word *predict* in Webster’s Dictionary we find: “to declare or indicate in advance; *especially*: foretell on the basis of observation, experience, or scientific reason.” The root of the word simply means “say before,” but the common usage today would align itself more with foretelling based on an observation or experience, like forecasting the weather.

While Micah’s statement about the birthplace of Christ was a prediction in the first sense of the definition above (declaring in advance), it cannot be explained by the second definition (“foretell on the basis of observation, experience, or scientific reason”). This is because Micah was not analyzing patterns or basing his proph-

ecy on his personal experiences and knowledge of the Messiah. He wasn’t thinking that Jesus would *probably* be born in Bethlehem in Judah. No. It was the omniscient God who cannot lie who told Micah what was going to happen. Micah was merely passing the true Word of God along. The fulfillment of what Micah said was sure, not just probable. This was not a message from a weatherman, but from the God who controls the weather. And this surety is true of ALL the prophecies we find in Scripture.

Be aware that many modern Bible translations use a form of the word *predict* when talking about the sure proclamations of God. While this is not technically wrong according to the definition above, the wording can be misleading to many hearers if it is not carefully defined and explained as a sure foretelling of God’s Word and His plan.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Sovereign Lord, who am I that you would save me? Who am I that you would reveal yourself to me? I never cease to be in awe of your ways! You loved me before the creation of the world. And you already had a plan in place to provide a way to save me from the punishment I deserve. Thank you for Jesus. This lesson brings me delight as I consider the continuity of Scripture. I am reminded that it’s your Word. It’s not a collection of the writings of men. You’ve preserved your Word through the ages, so that we would be able to know you and your plan of salvation. To you alone be the glory! Help me to be your vessel as I teach these truths to the precious children in my class. May each one receive your Word with joy and understanding.

➤ **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.



Review

If you recall, we are looking at the history of the kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom of what was once the united Israel. We skipped over much of the early years of the kingdom and moved on to the later years around the fall of Samaria/Israel in 721 BC.

Today, we will be looking at some of the prophecies of Micah. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and prophesied against Samaria before its fall and in Judah.

Look at Micah 1:1 with me where you can see these ideas clearly. *Read the passage aloud.*

The early chapters of Micah lay out many pronouncements of judgment against Israel and Judah as well as the future promises of restoration. Our focus today is on one part of the message of hope that Micah delivered, but there is much more we could draw out of this book to understand God's character, especially as Savior, more fully.



➤ Write on the board, "Did Micah predict the birthplace of the Messiah?"



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Let's read Micah 5:1–9 together with our focus on verses 2–4. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Micah 5:1–9

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? **Who is speaking in this passage?** *Micah the prophet is speaking on behalf of God. Looking back at 4:6, it is clear that the Lord is speaking.*
- ? **What type of literature is this passage?** *There is a lot of figurative language and prophetic imagery, making this prophetic literature. Notice all of the future-tense wording in the passage.*

- ? **Does anyone have a heading in their Bible above verse 2?** *Many Bibles will add headings such as The Coming Messiah above this section. Remind the students that these headings are not part of the inspired text.*
- ? **If these headings are accurate, what evidence should we find in the text?** *It should be speaking of the coming Messiah.*
- ? **Did anyone see any evidence of this passage speaking of the Messiah to come?** *We will be looking at four distinct points: Birth in Bethlehem; His eternal nature; His connection with Judah; His role as a shepherd. Read verses 2 through the first line of 5 again to emphasize these points. The activity will draw out some of these connections and their fulfillment.*
- ? **What other elements of this passage point to the future?** *There is a mention of the Assyrian invasion that is still future, as well as mention of future peace that will be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ. In this sense, there is the near and future fulfillment of aspects of this passage, a common feature of Old Testament prophecies.*

Discover the Truth

I want you to think about the way we often talk about biblical prophecies for a moment. We often say that Micah *predicted* the birthplace of Jesus.

- ? **Do you see any potential danger in using that word, *predict*?** *That word is often used in a sense of looking at patterns in nature, such as predicting the weather, or looking at who might win the Super Bowl, predicting the outcome of the season. We need to be careful not to let ourselves think of these prophecies in that sense, but in the true sense of the word—to say before.*

These are sure and true sayings of God, not optimistic or educated guesses about what might come to pass. Micah didn't get lucky; he boldly proclaimed the truth of what would happen in the future, speaking as the mouthpiece of God.

Micah was clearly speaking of a Ruler who was to come, where He would be born, and His role when He arrived. He did more than *predict* this coming Ruler; he *proclaimed* His coming as a sure event. Remember that this section started back in verse 4:6 with "Says the Lord."

You are all likely familiar with the connection to Bethlehem, but some of the other aspects might be less familiar. Micah was a herald of the Messiah. He was offering hope in the midst of despair over the coming judgment. That hope could only come from God.



- We must be careful to define words biblically as we share the truths of Scripture.



Micah's Prophecies

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

In your Student Guides you will find the Micah's Prophecies activity. Your job is to connect the five verses that are listed at the top to the four parts of the prophecy we pulled out of Micah 5. We will discuss those after you have had a chance to make the connections. Help the students if they have any difficulty making the connections.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's review each part of the prophecy and its fulfillment.

1. **Out of Bethlehem shall come the One to be Ruler in Israel:** *Micah 5:2 says that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. This is clearly the city in Judah identified as the birthplace of Jesus in Luke 2. Just as there is a Paris, Idaho and a Paris, Kentucky, there was more than one Bethlehem. This reference in Micah cannot be confused with another Bethlehem which was in northern Israel because of the reference to Judah (the region where Bethlehem lies) and the Ephrathah identifier, so there is no mistaking the clarity of the exact city.*
2. **The Ruler will be from Judah, bringing peace to Israel:** *This one is a bit trickier, but David was from the line of Judah. In Genesis 49:10, as Jacob (Israel) is blessing his sons and grandsons, he offers the blessing to Judah with some cryptic language about a scepter that will remain until Shiloh (the peaceful one) comes. As we connect this to the fact that Revelation 5:5 refers to Jesus as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, we begin to see the connection. What was fuzzy in the old has been made clear in the new. There are several other possible allusions to the role of the Messiah in Genesis 49, but we will not deal with them directly.*
3. **The Ruler's nature is from everlasting (eternal):** *John 1:1–2 make it clear that Jesus, the Word, was present as God before the world was created. Jesus is*

eternal, the Ruler in Micah was from everlasting (eternal), and so the connection is clear. There are also hints of this in the Genesis 49 passage.

4. **The Ruler will feed His flock:** *Jesus refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11, and the rest of the context of that passage talks about the care of the flock. Later, Jesus told Peter to feed His sheep (John 21:15–17). There is also a future sense to this passage that looks forward to the Second Coming. Refer to the Scarlet Thread Poster.*

All of these details are part of the scarlet thread of Jesus that is woven throughout the Old Testament. All of these prophecies from Genesis on are pointing forward to the Messiah—the one who would come and bring peace to His flock and sit on the eternal throne given to David. The shadows of the Old Testament were actually shedding light on God's plan to bring restoration to the world that had been corrupted by sin. This plan had been in place before time began or the world was even created.

First Peter 1:20–21 says, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God". This same idea is also expressed in Ephesians 1:4 and Revelation 13:8.

God had communicated clearly, and there was no mistaking the fact that the Messiah was coming and that He would be born in Bethlehem. This was clear to the Jews at the time of Christ. When the magi came to honor Christ at His birth, the religious scholars told them He was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matthew 2:1–7), even referencing the Micah prophecy as proof.



READ THE WORD

Now that we have looked at the coming Messiah and Micah's proclamation, let's take a look at what He would work among His people at His arrival. Will someone please read Micah 7:18–20? *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Micah 7:18–20

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What words from this passage are used to refer to sin?** *Iniquity, transgression, iniquities, sins; each of these is a unique angle on sin of different character.*
- ? **According to this passage, how does God view mercy?** *He delights in showing mercy to sinners!*
- ? **What things will God do with sin?** *He will subdue it, cast sins into the depth of the sea, pass over transgressions, and pardon iniquity.*
- ? **God is angry against sin, but what will happen to His anger?** *He will not retain His anger forever.*
- ? **All of these things are pointing to the forgiveness of sin. Is this forgiveness applied to all people?** *The passage is speaking specifically of the remnant of Israel and directed toward God's people. The pronouns are referring to those who have received the promises of redemption through Jacob and Abraham. In a New Testament sense, we can apply these things to Christians as they are repeated in the New Testament.*
- ? **If God is just, how can He pass over the sin of His people?** *He can only be just if He demands a payment for the sin, and that sin was paid for in Christ's work on the Cross.*

Let's make a connection to the New Testament. Turn to 1 Peter 2 and let's read verses 20 through 25. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

1 Peter 2:20–25

- ? **How has God been able to send our sins to the bottom of the ocean, pardon our iniquity, and set His anger aside while maintaining His justice?** *Our penalty for sin was laid on Christ, so God is just in that the penalty has been paid—the sin has been punished.*
- ? **How is God's mercy—the mercy He delights in—demonstrated in this passage?** *God has withheld the punishment deserved by sinners, laying it on Christ in our place.*

Discover the Truth

The Old Testament saints understood the gospel, looking to God to forgive their sins. They knew He was both merciful and just. They did not know the name *Jesus*, but they knew the Christ—the Messiah. They looked forward to the promise of His coming. We look back to the work He finished on our behalf. But we both look to Jesus for His saving work and righteous life.

MERCIFUL

JUST

The gospel message is often referred to as the great exchange. While we often remember that Christ took our sins upon Himself on the Cross, we must also remember that He has given us His righteousness. In His mercy and justice, God's grace abounds toward us. Christ's righteousness has been given to us when we did not deserve anything but His wrath! If that does not stir your heart to praise God, you might not be trusting in Him.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

While we may be tempted to think of Jesus coming to the earth as something we learn from the New Testament, we can actually learn much about the coming Ruler and Savior by studying the Old Testament. The Godhead had planned the redemption of a fallen race before the world was ever created. As history progressed, God revealed more and more about the plan of redemption and the Person who would bring it to completion.

As we read the words recorded by Micah, we are looking at very specific prophecies that would surely come to pass. Speaking 700 years before the birth of God in human flesh, Micah gave very specific details to the people of Israel and Judah. He was offering them hope of a future where there would be peace and freedom from the Curse. We can thank God for allowing us to have the fullness of the revelation of His plans; looking back to connect the dots through the old to the new. All of that should give us great confidence in our God.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What was most helpful to you in our study today?** *Discuss various answers, encouraging your students as you see them growing in understanding.*
- ? **Have you been guilty of thinking about the Old Testament prophecies in the same way you think about predictions about the weather or who will win the Super Bowl? How has your thinking changed?** *Discuss various answers, focusing on the certainty of biblical prophecy since it originates with the omnipotent, omniscient, sovereign God.*
- ? **As you think about the idea of the scarlet thread of events pointing forward to Christ, how are you encouraged?** *This should give us great comfort, knowing that God has been at work to bring about His plans and that we can receive the benefits of all He has done.*
- ? **How could you use the ideas from this lesson to share the gospel with someone who is not trusting in Christ?** *Discuss various answers.*
- ? **How could you use the ideas from this lesson to encourage another believer?** *Discuss various answers.*



MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for revealing His plan of redemption to us.
- Praise God for His justice and mercy demonstrated in the Cross.
- Ask God for boldness to share His offer of redemption with others.

