

Micah 5: 1-5a (New International Version)

- ¹ Marshal your troops, O city of troops, ^[a]
for a siege is laid against us.
They will strike Israel's ruler
on the cheek with a rod.
- ² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans ^[b] of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins ^[c] are from of old,
from ancient times. ^[d] "
- ³ Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor gives birth
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.
- ⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
- ⁵ And he will be their peace.

Footnotes:

- a. [Micah 5:1](#) Or *Strengthen your walls, O walled city*
- b. [Micah 5:2](#) Or *rulers*
- c. [Micah 5:2](#) Hebrew *goings out*
- d. [Micah 5:2](#) Or *from days of eternity*

Preceding text, that "builds out" an image--Micah 4: 1-4

- ¹ In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established
as chief among the mountains;
it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.
- ² Many nations will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."
The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
- ³ He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.
They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.
- ⁴ Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

OASIS: Christmas means... a new day is coming and has already begun! (Micah 5)

(Leaders note: Micah 5 is one of the classic Christmas prophecies. However, this new hope is set in the context of times of trouble and spiritual short-comings. Today's study features the hope and peace that result from the birth of a new kind of ruler. We will concentrate on 5 verses in Micah 5, but then look back briefly into Micah 4, where "peace" is more fully described.)

Possible Starter question:

- What are some of the contributing causes that make life in the 21st century feel so *insecure*?
- On a more personal level, what things or concerns increase your sense of insecurity?

Transitional comment: Amidst a time of great insecurity and fear, the 7th century BC prophet, Micah, speaks of an advent that has the promise to radically reshape our lives and world.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit's leading (if you haven't already prayed).
- Let's listen as someone reads our main passage aloud (Micah 5: 1-5a).
- Now, take several minutes to study "hopes and fears" contained in these verses.

Micah 1: 1-5a:

- O What statements in this passage raise concern or reflect difficulty and doom?
(n.b. Micah's ministry occurred when Assyrian armies were conquering Israel. Israel's corrupt leadership was choosing to rely on military prowess, riches and pagan alliances—and not upon God. This siege of Jerusalem was 701 BC.)
- O In v. 2, what do you learn about Bethlehem and why is it an unlikely hometown for Israel's promised ruler? (a bit like Rhode Island?)
(n.b. Bethlehem was not only small but also obscure and of little political status. It stood in contrast to Jerusalem, the city of the proud and idolatrous urban elite.)
 - I What sort of "misinformed assumptions" is God challenging?
 - A As part of a large and well-resourced church, what are some assumptions about God's favor that we must be especially careful to avoid?
 - I Why do you think it is important to God in this forth-coming birth?
*(n.b. See 1 Sam. 17: 12, for the Messiah was linked to the line of Jesse and David.)
(also read Matthew 2:6—in this section, Matthew clarifies several aspects.)*
- O What else (vs. 2-5) do we learn about the identity/character and activity of the promised ruler? First, what do we see about his identity? Then, his activity?
(n.b. This is a big question. See if you can tease out the different elements, i.e. identity/character before discussing the activity. Don't worry if they can be blurred.)
- O What does v. 4 explain about "how" he is able to do what he does?
 - I What might it mean for us to live "in the strength of the LORD"?
 - O What difference in people can this new ruler make?

I. What does it mean “to live securely”? In peace?
What do the opposites look like?

A What needs to happen your life or faith, that you might “live securely” and allow Christ to provide his peace in you?

Now, let’s read the “companion passage” of Micah 4: 1-4, which adds insight about “peace.”

O What does God do in providing peace?

O What do we learn to do in pursuing peace? What do we avoid or cease doing?

O For whom is God’s peace intended?

Conclusion: Identify some of the ironies in this passage that contribute to the Christmas story.

A As a song of celebration, sing together “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”
(*n.b. The words are below. It is among the “most easy to sing” Christmas carols.*)

A Finally, use that carol to form your prayer, as you pray together.

O Little Town of Bethlehem:

**O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight**

**For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth**

**How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.**

**O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel**

Text is on other page or www.Biblegateway.com

- a. BIG idea: God promises to overcome evil and injustice, and has begun to do that by sending His Son. Christmas means...a new day is coming, and has already begun!
- b. Key verse: Micah 5: 4 & 5: *He will stand and shepherd his flock..., and he will be their peace.*
- c. KEY: O = Observation; I = Interpretation; A = Application (or C = Challenge).

Advice to study leaders:

- d. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? What do others see/think?).
- e. Determine the core questions you’ll ask (know which ones to skip if pressed for time).
- f. Reword questions in words that are comfortable for you (discard those you don’t understand).
- g. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- h. If you are utilizing this “on-line” study and not part of the OASIS course, ask “Santa” for the 1-volume commentary, New Bible Commentary, Revised (21st Century Ed, IVP). Worth it!